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ARVELON.

ARVELON :

A First Poem.

BY

W. J. DAWSON.



London :

SAMUEL TINSLEY AND CO.,

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PRELUDE.

I

6

PRELUDE.

I.

HUSH ! it is night : the silver moon
Rides high above the clear lagoon,
Cool from the mountain sweeps the breeze
Fragrant with scents of odorous trees.
Hushed sleeps the earth,—sad, solemn, still,
The silence broods o'er vale and hill,
Save when some sweet and nameless sound,
Like trespasser on sacred ground,
Fearful of echoes it hath made,
Flutters into congenial shade.
Night,—as alone it meets the eyes
Beneath the bend of foreign skies,
In far-off lands of happier clime,
Where mirth and music soften time,
Where breathe the fair, where love the bold
Who drink the bowl of life they hold

So fast they have no time to stay
The march of havoc and decay,
Nor is slow step or dimming eye
For these who all too early die.
Speak not : so still are hill and dell
'Twere sacrilege to break the spell ;
Mar not the silence with the tone
Of words, where man may feel alone ;
E'en harp and lyre, e'en love-tuned lute,
In this sweet hour were better mute.
Nor is there sound, unless it be
The nightingale's low minstrelsy,
Such as could lull the heart of night
Into this slumber of delight.
So tranquil lies the world, 'twould seem
All things had died, as in a dream,—
Save that the stars with tender eyes
Watch mildly, and the fading dyes
Of vanished daylight linger yet ;
Save that each slumb'rous leaf is wet
With tepid dews of sleep, not death,
And that the air is warm with breath
Of radiant flowers, that all unseen
Breathe forth their scents from beds of green

While o'er each bough, each slope, o'er all,
Like woven silver, or a pall
Of living light, full, rich, and warm,
There falls the moonlight's mystic charm.

II.

In the silver light I wander forth :
Drowsily sounds the midnight's knell,
Floating away from south to north,
Lingering around me like a spell.
Oh ! what a beautiful hush is this ;
The tired earth sleeps like a weary child,
Calmed to rest by a mother's kiss,
And the beat of her bosom undefiled,
Whose musical throbbing lulls the child.
O my Soul ! unfettered and wild,
Rest thou too in this solemn calm,
While the south wind chants a soothing psalm,
And the rustling leaves a lullaby mild ;
Nor stir with the fiercer pulse of thought
And the hopes and fears of a wasted life.
This is a temple, grandly wrought,—
It is meet to banish passion and strife ;
This is a temple,—wrong it not,

This is in truth a sacred spot.
Worship, O Spirit ! and bow thine head ;
Hearest thou not the angels tread
Pair by pair down the moonlit stair,
Chanting in chorded music rare ?
And hearest thou not the organ sound
Of the happy spheres play solemn and low
The music to which the earth goes round ?
And the rivers of silver starlight flow ?
I tell thee, Soul, this is sacred ground,
Fit for a poet's vigil and prayer ;
And here thou shalt watch, that on thy strings
The breath of God with hurrying wings
May beat and pant, and waken a strain
Of beautiful song in the world again.

III.

Is it not sweet, with quiet mind,
Far from the fevered world of sin,
To drink this summer silence in,
And let the heart so long confined
By narrow laws, and stifling chains
Of Samsons weakened and made blind,
Beat forth once more, resolved and free,

Beat forth forgetful of its pains,
And strong in natural liberty ?
Hark ! there's a sound within the vale :
The light breeze stirs the foliage pale
Of aspens by the river brink,
Whose leaves incessant rise and sink,
As though a sighing sense of life
Stirred their sap with painful strife.
Long since the labouring man has stayed
The labour of his well-worn blade,
With weary feet has homeward trod
Across the vineyard's fragrant sod,
Has broke his crust, has made his prayer,
Has bade farewell to toil and care,
And given himself to sleep—and God.
Hard pillow his for easy rest !
Yet steady heaves his swarthy breast ;
He sleeps with slumber full as sweet
As treads with glide of noiseless feet,
Where tufted carpets clothe the ground,
And silver lamps hang radiant round
The silken couch in splendour spread,
With many a nodding plume o'erhead,
While soft, subdued, the timid ray,

Trembling gilds with sleeping beams
The queenly face, where happy dreams
With a mystic meaning play.
Sweet as this is rest to those
Who pass from labour to repose,
The poor man's scanty bed to share ;
For who shall say that even there
There come not winged spirits fair,
Who bend, who gaze, who whisper low,
Who lightly kiss the heavy brow,
And leave upon the work-worn face
A transitory stamp of grace.

IV.

Why is it that we dream not oft
Save when the star of night aloft
Hangs like a watch-fire at the gate
Of that great palace, where in state
Jehovah reigns girt round with song?
Is staring day too rude for things
Of beauty such as midnight brings
In dreams that to the night belong?
Our sweetest hopes, our highest joys
The wandering seer of night employs

To soothe the sadness of the brain
That dreams, and fain would dream again.
The darkness of unhappy days
Is vanished then : the blessed rays
Of hope shine thick amid our tears ;
As light when storms are overpast,
Till each salt drop a star appears
Of peace new-born, with prophesy
Of deathless joy that hastes to die,
And lasting hope that doth not last.
Pale forms of woe die where they stand,
Nor breathe in Dream's wild wonder-land :
The misery, care, the strife, the strain
Of daily trouble, hidden pain,
Of all the aching wounds that smart
Around the well-nigh broken heart,
Are lost,—and in the cloudy land
Of slumber we walk hand in hand
With joys that perished long ago,
Joys and hopes, a happy band.
O fair shapes! how thick ye throng
By these streams of gentle flow,
Crowding, wandering to and fro
In this happy world of song,

In this land of dreams and sleep,
Where I hear no voice of woe,
And behold not any weep.
And lo ! within these realms Elysian
Face to face I see a vision
Of my own soul, divine and free,
All it was and meant to be ;
All it was, when hope was young
In the glad days so remote,
When the heart of youth was strong
With the fiery nourishment
Of high visions, which would float
In ambitious glory by ;
Ere the spirit's fire was spent,
Ere its aspirations fled,
Leaving all its essence sad
With a grief that cannot die.
Such a vision once I had ;
Lo ! before my darkened eyes
Rose the kingdom of the dead,
With this dream of Paradise,
And my own soul in beauty clad.
Know I not these spirits holy ?
Knew I not in time gone by

Their sweet souls, as I thought wholly,
Ere they vanished to the sky?
Wonderest thou that in my slumbers
Still they crowd and hover nigh,
Singing in harmonious numbers
Songs men learn not till they die?
See, how they come and go,
Dreams of night!
In procession glad and slow,
Amid the softened light.
Fond faces long since reft away,
With fond eyes gazed in many a day,
And their every shape I know.
I press their lips, their hands I hold;
They speak, nor are the accents cold;
They gaze,—it is the same meek smile.
Long absence has not stolen the wile
Of that gay lip; years with the dead
Have robbed no lock from that fair head;
Chill years beneath that moss-grown tone
Have driven no laughter from that face.—
The same; but oh! it dies away;
Stern break the lights of morning gray.
'Twas but a dream—the dream is done,

A moment more, then comes the sun ;
The world's vast pulses fill with life,
And it is here, the day, the strife.
And lo ! he stirs, the giant Time ;
His rest is past,—sadly sublime
He opes his broad eternal eye,
And sorrows that he cannot die.

v.

Thus Love claims two worlds for his own,
This, and another fairer far ;
What we may be when we are full-grown,
Is but the measure of what we are.
This is the darkness, that the light ;
If in the darkness thou shalt be
Light in thyself, no shadow of night
Ever hereafter thou shalt see.

* * * *

Then said I, Love is a holy thing,
Pure must be the spirit of him
Who dares its passion of pain to sing,
Or frame its joy in a happy hymn.
A fiery spirit is his, and bold,
Gifted too with a gentler part,

Cast in a lofty and noble mould,
Who sings the love of a human heart.
He shall suffer who fain would sing,
And through that travailing shall be born
A holier creature, a crownèd King,
Though it may be with a crown of thorn.
His soul shall shudder with awful throes
Of bitter pain endured for others,
And, it may be, out of a valley of woes
He shall gladden with song his brothers.
And men shall labour with happier will,
Gladder at heart, they know not why ;
Not till the hopeful voice is still,
Not till the lark has left the sky,
Singing a death-song faint and sad,
Down the dreary October blast,
Shall they know the love they had
For him whose music is hushed at last.

* * * * *

And then perchance in the days to come,
When Knowledge rules with a broader sway,
When war has stilled her murderous drum,
And ancient tyrannies fast decay,—
Then, oh then, in the days to come,

Men shall awaken, and men shall say,—
“What, is the voice of the singer dumb?
What, has the poet passed away?
Lo, this poet above our strife
Saw his vision of world-wide truth,
And sang his epic of human life
To cheer the heart of man and youth;
And now that all is over and gone,
Now we know that he sang for us,
And we will boast this poet was one
Who loved all love. With mournful tone
We say this, and honour him thus.”

VI.

Thus in the stillness thoughts came fast,
And my heart burned clear with a holy light,
And I wondered whether indeed at last
My soul was strong for a poet's flight.
For all through the midst of the middle night
Sweet songs came floating across my brain,
Snatches of early boyish rhymes,
Ringing like distant sad church chimes,
With a music of joy and a wail of pain,
Through the orchestra of my brain.

And under the trees in the lone moonlight,
A chorus of angels dressed in white,
I thought I saw ; and they sang, " Redeemed
Is the man who loves, and who hateth not
Aught save the stain of sin's base blot ;
For Love is the soul of truth and right,
And is greater than poet ever dreamed,
And towards it the whole great world shall move
Till man is as God,—and God is love ! "

VII.

" Pity the poet," I hear you say ;
" A frail wild soul with a burning fire
Eating his thought and himself away
In fierce night dreams of a strained desire."
Nay, not so ; he bears his pain,
But surely he hath his recompense ;—
He nor sings nor suffers in vain,
Who snatches a true thought out of the flame,
And flings it forth in the vast immense
As a lighted brand,—though it burn the hand
Of him who moulded and gave it name.
Not gone by is the poet's day ;
In this clamorous world of strife

A poet may still build up his life,
And find a place for his harp to play,
And a little space to be glad and gay.
If he be poet men will hear,
As men have done since the world begun ;
And far away upward over the dark
Of passionate life-work, like a lark
At home in the bosom of the sun,
His song shall soar serene and clear.
And the hearts of men shall tremble and burn
With the sweet wild rapture of the young ;
And in after ages men shall turn
A face of kindness on him who sung.

VIII.

Is *this* a dream of wild deceit ?
Or is it a true-born intuition,
Which time and labour may make complete
With finished hope and glad fruition ?
Is it a vanity to aspire
One day or other to become
Like the ideal of my desire,—
A poet, filled with a poet's fire,
Striking a pæan from his lyre

Of things accomplished ; one in whom
Is music, and hope, and burning speech,
With a voice to sing, and a right to teach ?
A poet ! What is the substance and sum
Of such a word, I pray you tell,—
Who and what may the poet be ?
Let me measure my aspiration
Strictly, truly, that it may be well :
For empty wealth of asseveration
Counts for little with men who see,
And vanity sounds its own death-knell.
This I hold : the poet is he,
Strong in a natural strength of soul,
Who gathers feelings that quickly flee,
And thoughts and senses half-divine,
And into one truthful and rounded whole
Of excellent utterance doth combine
The silent poems of all mankind,
Who have a share of the poet's mind,
But never have tasted the god-like wine
The son of genius lives to find,
Which loosens the stammering human tongue,
To echo the chorus gods have sung.
Yet he is no creature of loftier birth

Than these who toil in the trodden way
Of human rapture and human wrong ;
He is the child of the common day,
Who weaves in rythm of living song
Feelings that to all men belong,—
Sorrow and pleasure, and pain and mirth,
Wisdom to suffer, and courage to dare,
Passions and hopes which all men share.

IX.

Enough. I have woven a firstling song
(The world is cruel to firstling songs,
So they say, but yet I long
To think man better than man may say,
And greater in goodness than in wrongs).
Here it is, the first-born lay,
Wrought in a fever of will and thought,
In the fervour of which it well may be
The reason hath not been just to see
The new-born fantasies as it ought.
In pain and pleasure in hath been wrought,
And wonder that in a quiet heart
There should leap up this sudden passion,
Swift as the burst of a thunder peal,

And straightway the living brain should fashion
Shapes and human figures,—a part
Fancy and shadowy, and part real.
Take it,—the thought of a summer's night,
Born of the stillness and the stars ;
A dream that came on the wings of light,
Bright with the Venus light of love,
And red with the glow of blood-red Mars.
One true thought is a thing divine,
A citizen of a world above ;
If in these verses there but shine
One such thought, lo, I am content.
That vision shall light the hearts of men,
And be as a gladsome sacrament
To make life nobler and sweeter, when
The breath of the singer who sings is spent,
And the bowl is broke at the fountain-head,
And the poet is dust in a narrow bed.

CANTO I.
THE DEPARTURE.

CANTO I.

THE DEPARTURE.

I.

'Tis night, and brightly shines the moon
On the lone towers of Arvelon ;
And brighter yet is the red glow
Where lambent torches flash and flow,
With many a weirdly joyful beam,
Through court and hall, a fiery stream.
For there is festival to-night,
The doors stand open, all invite,
And all will deem this joyful hour
Fit time to swell the mirth, and pour
The minstrel's strain of chivalry,
The song of deeds that cannot die,
The praise of whose great name shall make
These grey old walls of Arvelon shake.
Stern stands each tower, as meant to brave

The shock of Time, the force of wave ;
Around three walls the water flows—
A guard impassable to foes ;
The fourth, a precipice as deep
As the dark gulf where spirits weep,
Falls sheer, and dim ; and on its steep
Frowns the embattled castle keep,
Crumbling e'en now in dust away,
But stately yet in its decay,
And covered, as by hands that shun
To show the spoil of time begun,
With the dark ivy's ebon green,—
Sole link too oft to what hath been ;—
Frail plant, whose tendrils grasp the stone
When gayer flowers are fled and gone,
Last watcher at the grave of Age,
Last conquered by the tempest's rage ;
When statelier trees that deck the glade,
Despoiled and prostrate, low are laid,
This with its strength in weakness shown,
Like woman—oft remains alone.

II.

To-night the ancient pile is gay,
Around each gate the minstrels play ;
The gates are open, through them throng
The tide of men with mirth and song.
Loud sounds the fitful trumpet's blare,
High in the courtyard bonfires flare,
The steed is champing in the stall,
The feast is flowing in the hall,
A hundred banners faintly move
In the dim arched roof above,
While in yon oriel window tall
The lordly scutcheon frowns o'er all.
Here Beauty's self enthralls the eye
In a wondering ecstasy,
Till the faint heart wonders why
Such delicious tremors fly
Through the pulses beating high :
Sweet bosoms pant with pleasure's sigh,
Soft eyes look love that needs no word
To wean the warrior from his sword,
And make the man of armies bend
To charms where youth and beauty blend.

Fair cheeks blush brighter at the praise
Of the hushed word, the straining gaze,—
With quicker throb the pulses beat
At that light sound of hurrying feet,
As down the hall the couples sweep
Like sister streams that part and meet ;
And hark ! in tones unutterable
The yearning music weaves its spell,
The yearning music hastes to steep
The troubled senses in a sleep
Of ecstasy, and joy, and pain.
O sounds divine ! my eye grows dim,
My soul chants in some solemn hymn,
Some solemn, strange, unearthly strain
Of rapture,—almost agony.
Heaven dawns, and Paradise is nigh,
The common earth lies far away ;
My heart soars free beneath thy sway,
While soft as Love, or Hate as deep,
Now sighing as the strings would weep
The pains of angels in distress,
Now swelling full with lengthening sound,
The clamorous passions crowd and press ;
Or, grander yet, the chords abound

With notes of anguish and despair ;
Mirth deepens into tragedy,
Wild storms of sound go wailing by
In tears that darken all the air,
And die away in mournful cries,
While the sick soul in mute surprise
Stands wondering in a dreamy trance,
Whence rose this Spirit of the Dance,
Who first lured Rapture from the skies !

III.

I. *Semi-Chorus.*

Gaily the trooping hours flit by,
One by one !
What though darkness is in the sky,
We want no sun !
Touch the harp with a sweeter sound,
And let the merry dance go round,—
We are young, and shall not die,
And this is the hour when Joy is found !

Chorus.

Joy is found in the gladsome dance,
On ! on !

And bliss lives in the burning glance,
On ! on !
Gaily singing, Love comes bringing
All her flowers and fruit to-night,
All her flowers,
And the merry hours
Join in a chorus of delight !

II. *Semi-Chorus.*

A spirit there is, who in the blue
Of the sky
Sits clad in the rainbow's ærial hue,
With quenchless eye !
His beating wings our music are,
His radiant wings we cannot view,
He rides within the western star,
And sings the song of youth afar,
In a chorus ever strong and new !

Chorus.

Seize the hour of youth, saith He,
Seize it now !
While the heart is glad and free,
Even now !

Feebly creeping, Age comes weeping,
With her breast all bare and cold,
With her breast
In an icy vest,—
Alas ! 'tis anguish to grow old !

IV.

But who is she, who seen afar
Shines as some more resplendent star ?
Among a thousand to see her
Was to forget that others were ;
So fair a face, so high a mien,
She well had stood for Beauty's queen.
Whoever gazed, it seemed that he
Might worship too with prostrate knee,
Like pilgrim at a sacred shrine,
Which holds a wonder half divine.
For Beauty is divinity,
Nor is it sin to bless the grace
Which lingers with a fallen race,
And bids us learn, in spite of sin,
The greatness of our origin.
Yet 'tis not loveliness of face
Which makes alone that matchless grace ;

'Tis not that glow of golden hair,
That eye so deep, that form so fair,
Whose rounded shape, whose perfect flow
Attracts,—though few indeed might know
Charms that could vie with these.
She was no nymph for harem's ease,
No toy to fondle or to please,
No maid whose face is all her store,—
Her wealth was deeper, better, more ;
Each glance, each word, each tone, the whole
Bespoke that richest gift—a soul.
You felt a mind was there, whose power
Might charm in chill disaster's hour,
Whose voice might have a claim to speak
When you were overwhelmed or weak ;
A noble heart,—so pure it was,
As dwells the breath on polished glass,
And quickly as it came doth pass,
So if ill thoughts had lightened there
They quickly fled from soul so fair :
And yet that guileless innocence,
Held powers of love no pain could quench,—
Love that is strong, and doth endure
Immortal only while 'tis pure.

Call her not weak, because her soul
Could deeply love ; a sweet control
Was stronger than the victor sway
Which stole the love-lulled sense away.
For Love that only loves is weak,
It knows one mood, and only one ;
Its sensual sense of bliss to seek
In soft endearments,—this alone.
But Love is great when it can change
Its guise to sternness that can act,
Counting all moods within its range,
From martyrdom to woman's tact.
When noblest was that pallid queen,
Fair-fated Marie Antoinette ?
When in the bliss of love serene,
With doting king, and boys to pet ?
Or when with drooping, anguished eye,
She languished in a prison cell,
Or moved in fearless calm to die
Through crowds that raged, a living hell ?
The heaven that rocks the summer light
On its bosom like a child,
Stands steadfast through the furious night
When the thunder-bolts fly wild.

Strength with softness shall unite
In the love that loveliest is ;
Goddess-like, majestic might
Hide behind the woman's kiss.
And here was love that e'en could dare
To face the terrors of despair :
She could be brave,—you felt she too
Might wield a sword as well as you,
Might stand beside when, done to death,
Ebb'd life's slow tide, and sank life's breath,
Might seize the standard, snatch the blade,
Nor stem the wound, till she had made
Your victory complete ; or could
Perchance, at beck of milder mood,
Take and receive all love's caress,
Feel love's divine forgetfulness,
And when you died, would prove so true
The world for her would die with you.

v.

Alas, Cathrina ! hapless maid !
As homeward through the sombre midnight's shade
The peasant goes, or where the dark retreat
Of bending oaks defies the summer heat

And every light, save the stray beam of night,—
A lamp religious, burning still and bright ;
Where linked lovers stroll and nightly meet ;—
Anon they tell the miseries of thy tale,
And whisper of thy love with lips as pale
As the white light that falters at their feet.
They whisper, gazing with a shaded eye
At the lone peak where Arvelon's shadows lie :
Thy tale, though dreadful, yet to them is dear ;
They tremble, and yet love the pleasing fear ;
They wonder, while their glowing troth they speak
In accents low, and words but all too weak,
If their young love shall prove as true as thine,
Or shall with tested constancy combine
The burden of some undreamt bitterness :
They vow devotion, their fond hands entwine,
Their sighing bosoms seem to answer " Yes !"
They seal their shudders with a sweet caress,
And so from hour to hour they feed their flame
With the dear raptures of thy mournful name.

VI.

Yet sorrow had not touched that name,
Or mournful memory wreathed thy fame

On this gay night, when every eye
Turns where thy fairy footsteps fly,
When every heart feels softer thrill
To hear thy voice, to see thee fill
So fitly Arvelon's ancient throne,
Peerless in beauty, and alone
Of all the crowd that throng the hall
Fit queen of this high festival.
Who shall forget thee, gentle maid,
As first from childhood's tender shade
Thou pass't, and star-like took thy place
In this human hemisphere,
Bright with the fair untainted grace
Of virgin souls, serene and clear?
Fresh childhood with thy budding youth
Had left its innocence and truth,
Like faint spring fragrance lingering still
In early morn beneath the hill,
Long after the unclouded sky
Has filled with tropic radiancy.
Nor from thy figure, full yet slight,
Had girlhood's signs departed quite :
No older caution froze the thought,
Or checked the freedom age has not ;

Sweet indiscretions called the smile,—
The falseness of the aged wile,
The well-worn charms decked out to please,
Oh ! girlhood may know none of these !
And yet, while girlhood left the charm
Of sculptured cheek and rounded arm,
There crowned, completed, filled the whole
A noble woman's full-orbed soul,—
Which made the brow a thing divine,
Doubling each expressive line,
As though behind a sculptured face
There glowed a censor's unseen blaze,
Which burned for ever clear and full,
Transfiguring what was beautiful
A thousand-fold, till it were given
To gaze and catch a glimpse of heaven.
E'en so I saw thee, maiden fair,
Beautiful, and pure, and good,
Unsoiled by sin, untouched with care,
Just trembling into womanhood !

VII.

But who is this, who takes thy hand,
And leads thee with a mild command,

Far from the throng, as though 'twere his
To grasp at once a general bliss ;
Who gazes with such ardent eye,
Who steals so intimately nigh,
Whose presence seems a living law
Thy charms to rule, thy feet to draw,
While lo ! as by some secret spell,
The mantling tides of beauty's blush
Through thy veins delicious gush,
And thy love for him foretell ?
Oh ! oft in that gay crowd methought.
Thy captive eyes young Roland sought,
While courtiers hung upon thy tone
Thy face proclaimed the soul was gone,
Amid the mazy multitude
As one alone I saw thee brood
Until *he* spoke, and then thy frame
Grew bright, as though the vestal flame
Upon the mystic altar woke,
Which only Roland could invoke.
If it be true, as poets sing,
A spirit meek, or gay, or wise,
Underneath the eyelash lies
Stirless, on a folded wing,

Why then, thou pledg'st him with thine eyes,
Blue as some new heaven ~~revealed~~,
Though thy trembling lips were sealed,
Pledg'st him oft in glances bright
With meek soul-radiance of dellight.
As the wild Indian born and bred
Where native woods their foliage spread,
Though snatched to see some finer land,
Though landed on some wondrous strand
Where nature's glories bask together,
With cloudless skies and summer weather,
Yet still beneath the costliest dome
Can only *love* one spot,—his home ;
Or, as the forest dove one mate
Alone may find to share her state,
And when he dies, with ruffled plume
Droops widowed and disconsolate,
Envyng his untimely doom ;—
E'en so, in that gay hall which gave
Its ample space to fair and brave,
I saw thou lov'ds't but one, and he
Drew all thy spirit's loyalty.
As in a house, in one brave soul
Thy spirit dwelt, nor could the whole

Temptations of a life have riven
That pledge of love, accepted, given ;
A thousand stars around thee shone,
Still to thine eye there was but one.

VIII.

Was he not worthy ? Slight the word
So glibly spoken, lightly heard,
Which pride and vanity would claim,
Nor dream the vaunt an empty name.
'Tis said in old-world legend rare,
That when at first the sinning pair
Fled weeping forth in trembling haste
Into the sad world's homeless waste,
An angel, touched to tears, arose
In his high seat, and at the feet
Of God bowed down in reverence sweet,
Pleaded the cause of human woes,
And asked, the only favour left
Which He might grant who reigns above,
That, of their Paradise bereft,
The wandering couple still might love.
And love that glows in woman's heart
Is still a gift, which no desert

Can win, and still it doth impart
Itself, a balm for human hurt.
Happy ! happy ! happy he,
Wise in manly purity,
Who finds a holy virgin breast,
Where, like a fairy in the dome
Of some white lily, love doth rest
Steeped in dreams that thickly come,
Waiting till his tender kiss
Stir the sweet deep-lidded eyes
To awake and gaze in his,
Suddenly with love made wise,
Suddenly born into bliss.
Alas ! a thousand daily snares
Scar the heart of man with cares,
A thousand tempters throng his path,
And bought with anguish what he hath
Of knowledge or of bravery,
Of self-control or manliness ;
For youth's warm faith cannot but die
In manhood's whirlpool fathomless.
But woman, far from hate and strife,
Blossoms like a snowdrop into life ;
Wild passion doth not lacerate

With sorrows time can ne'er abate ;
The contact with the heartless throng
Is not for her ; the thought of wrong
Is as a nightmare. She but hears
Of cruel deeds and evil tears,
As one upon a summer's day
May in the throbbing stillness stand,
And hear the breakers in the bay
Roll muttered thunder far inland.
She hath one error, only one,—
She is by craft too gently won ;
She hath one fault, but so sublime
'Tis more a virtue than a crime,—
Not that she falls, or that she fell,
But that she loved, and loved too well.
And hers it is oft-times to soothe
A youthful heart bereft of youth,
A selfish soul which can receive
The gift of love but cannot give,—
A sinner in his last distress,
Who even amid his wickedness
Still has a heart to love, and still
Feels something nobler stir his will.
And despicable as may be

The man who by his treachery
Has won, but will not wear her heart,
Still love with her can ne'er depart,
But lonely, lost, with death beset,
She loves her love's betrayer yet !

IX.

Yet he was worthy, worthier far
Than most men can be, most men are ;
Enthusiastic, fervent, bold,—
His was a nature never cold ;
For every failure, every sin
Had sprung from that wild sense within
Which mocked the iron laws of fate,
And spent on all things mean a hate
Enduring as 'twas passionate.
What faults he had were faults that sprang
From very nobleness of will,
As though some saintly music rang
At eve, beyond the distant hill,
Which the soul went out to find,
And cursed, because the mocking wind
Swept it far, and farther still :
So evermore, some high ideal,

Thrilled his soul with lofty thought,
Till he woke, to find the real
Raining scorn on all he sought.
He yearned for holier things than crowd
The dusty way of common life,
The unclean joy, the clamour loud
Of mean or mercenary strife.
Still, ever distant, ever new,
That mystic music rose and grew ;
Sphere-music of a loftier state,
Immortal echoes of a zone,
Outside whose gate the soul doth wait,
A mighty exile, sad and lone,
A wanderer disconsolate,
Who listens, as though she would learn
How to repent, and how return,
By what eternity of pain
Her lost divinity to gain.
He spoke not often,—he knew well
That silence more than speech may tell ;
But in a multitude, his eye
Proclaimed a spirit free and high.
His step was grand, as though he trod
With lightning-feet all darkness down

And stood a victor with a crown
Amid the sun,—a hero-god.
His form, slight-built, yet firmly set,
Bespoke endurance in her prime,
And under his thick curls of jet
Intelligence and grandeur met
In that broad brow, serene and high,
And patient Thought sat throned sublime.
And then that glance, that speaking eye,
So sad, far-gazing, wistful, wide,
As though it scanned some swelling tide
Of thought, that beat a foreign strand,
Beyond ambition or command ;
While in its lucent depths there gleamed
The sense of that fair something lost
Which like a wreck-light dimly streamed
From a spirit tempest-tost.
His face among a multitude
You longed to see again,—
You knew not why, but while you viewed,
It grew upon the mind ;
And yet all scrutiny was vain
Its mystery to unbind.
Such was he, and his heart made known

A love which he was proud to own,
A rapture roused within his breast,
The first, the last, the holiest, best,
In which his soul resistless rolled
Like some strong current uncontrolled ;
Or like some molten stream of fire,
Which cools in a majestic mould
Of beauty answering to desire.
Thus his strong being, melted now,
Began to tremble and to flow ;
The chill of sceptic years was gone,
The sense of baser passions dead,
The better metal now is won,
The dross sinks in the furnace red ;
His soul beneath the spell doth move
It lives,—on heavenly fire 'tis fed !
Triumphant spell ! His soul is freed ;
Behold, ye watchers from above,
It takes the magic mould of Love.

x.

Oh ! rare it is two souls may dwell
To their own selves attuned so well
In perfect harmony of will,

No baser passion breathes its spell
Of evil discord, which doth fill
All after life with bitterness ;
No altered voice doth e'er confess,
In the coldly courteous tone,
The altered love it dare not own ;
No chilling words in days of doubt
The leaping fires of love put out,
Nor snares that fill the prosperous hour
With words that lure, and eyes that mock,
Spoil the love which scorned the power
Of the tempest's wilder shock.

But the wish of the heart ere 'tis spoken is known,
The desire of the spirit is told in a tone,
The joy and the rapture, the glory of living,
Is that the fond heart may ever be giving.
And happy the heart that hath the sweet learning
To double the grace of the gift in returning,
While spirit to spirit so sweetly is twined,
Time must sever the life ere it may unbind.
Such union is likest the faint-chiming vesper,
Which floats half asleep on the bosom of Hesper,
And rises and falls, far, tender, and dying,
With every soft motion, and indistinct sighing,

While the bells and the breeze are married and mated,
In sweetness that perishes when separated.

Oh ! such is the love that was breathed by the water,
Where clothed in her beauty sat Eden's new daughter ;
Oh ! such the affection, which all the outpouring
Of turbulent waters quench not with their roaring,
Nor darkness, nor death, pressing quick on each other,
Nor unforeseen evils ere shroud or ere smother :
E'en Reason's strong temple, when ravaged and shaken,
Still, still by one Spirit is never forsaken,
But round the fall'n pillars, where wild weeds are
clinging,

One strain of days long ago perished is ringing :
Life prostrate, and flown all the joys that adorn her,
Love lingers the last,—and the mournfullest mourner.

XI.

But where is Roland,—where is she,
The flower and queen of revelry ?
See,—at some word the youth doth speak,
Pale is her cheek as mountain's peak,
Clad with its immemorial snow,
And she is answering hushed and low.
One moment that deep eye grows dim

As tremblingly it looks on him,
Across her brow, swift as the light,
There fleets the shade of sudden blight !
A tremor dwells within her tone,
As though she tamed the rising moan,
And choked the surging sob of pain ;
One moment, she is calm again,
And o'er the timid woman's soul
There triumphs woman's strong control.
There, where the arras hides the wall
With fluttering horsemen, weird and tall,
As though it were some haunted spot,
The tide of revelry flows not,
There, there, they stand,—they disappear,
Nor mirth nor music longer hear ;
A moment,—all is silent—there,
Where the moonlight floods the stair,
They pass,—there comes the fresh'ning air,
The cool alcove,—and here, sweet love,
May we not speak ? Oh ! sweet sad Dove,
Is Hope quite dead ?
Alas the hour, the bitter hour that cries,
“ Hope is not dead, but dies ! ”
Love shuddering pines and sighs,

“ Yes, Hope is dead
In his chilly bed,
And sleeps with sightless eyes ! ”

XII.

And then and there broke forth the deep distress,
As waters long pent up in ice and snow ;
Then breathed the breath of warm love's tenderness,
And fast the struggling tears began to flow.
The white breast trembled, and the throat's convulsion,
Mixed with the rising sob, the stooping mien,
Declared how strong was hidden grief's revulsion,
And how severe its bondage must have been.
Some moments passed, no living word was spoken,
But gradually the storm itself has spent,
For half the tempest's fury has been broken
On that brave bosom, where she fondly leant :
And his hushed whisper, while the tears came faster,
Breathed tenderly between the storms of sighing,
Has quelled them, as though he had power to master
Tempestuous passions :—for the clouds are flying,
Her eye grows brave once more with love's endurance,
Her soul, as though ashamed of its own strife,

Pours out for him the wealth of love's assurance,
And in his answers breathes a double life.

XIII.

“And must thou go? Oh, Roland, stay,
Stay but to-morrow, but one day!
I ask not long,—a few brief hours,—
This message is so short, the powers
Of my weak heart seem rudely shaken,
And all the founts of tears awaken.
A few short hours,—oh, Roland, say,
Cannot thy comrades wait a day?
Thou lov'st them not—oh not with them
Thou hast exchanged affection's gem;
Thou hearest when the trumpets cry,
A word of war, and thou dost fly,—
Oh, wilt thou spurn the fonder plea
Of one whose love is all for thee,
Of one whose every gift is thine,
Whose name alone in thine can shine,
Who counts her honour, love, and life
But precious as they dower the wife
Of him whose charms have won her heart,
And of thy being made her part.

Stay : dangers brood with black'ning wing,
Like one perplexed to thee I cling,
As cling the shipwrecked to the rock
Amid the billow's roar and shock,
In the dark night when hell yawns wide
Through the wild seething, surging tide.
Whose name I bear, who gave me mine,
Has sworn my heart shall ne'er be thine.
Another, blessed in purse and pelf,
He wins to friendship, by myself—
Another, who with sordid claim
Will buy me, like some creature sold
By mart and barter for her shame.
O mother mine ! if from those cold
Sad heavens thou see'st thine only child,
A free-born spirit bought for gold,
Oh turn thy face, nor once behold,
Lest the strange sight should strike thee wild.
Another ?—nay, by all the stars
That cluster in the blue profound,
Travelling in their silver cars
Of light along their solemn round,
God's watchmen and His witnesses
Of human struggles and distress,—

I swear I will not hear the sound,
I will not even think the thought,
That one can live so lost to scorn
That he should calmly scruple not
To haggle for a thing free-born ;
One who shall seize the unwilling hand,
With faithless ring of right to band,
Whose wealth shall bring me to his side,
And all my heaven of honour hide
In that one word of blackness—Bride !
Nay : sooner shall yon silent tide,
That quivers in the moonbeam's ray,
Bear on its hushing breast away
A creature, who in her dismay
Sought refuge from the laws of hell,
And died,—a lily trodden down
By ruthless feet, within a dell
Where men had tried to wrest her crown
Of purity, but missed their spoil,
And trampled what they could not soil.
Nay : let not sadness cloud that brow,—
Thou knowest I can wait : the vow
Once past these lips which cling to thine,
Shall ne'er be broke by deed of mine.

But oh, my Roland, while I speak,
My heart, too full of love, will break ;
Some shadow of a coming woe
Foretold me that thou thus would'st go,
And while I drain the draught of tears,
There rise a thousand ghastly fears,
And all my shivering soul can say,
Is, 'Must thou go ? My Roland, stay !' "

XIV.

She paused : the violet veins, convulsed
With passionate feeling, fuller pulsed,
The living soul glowed with its yearning,
The fragile bonds of language spurning.
Nor spoke the youth : his lips were bent
O'er that fond form which on him leant ;
His face, bronzed by a burning clime,
Was pale with anguish, such as Time
Stamps on the aged, whose sad brows
Rise like scarred mountains topped with snows.
He, who had seen the conquered die ;
He, who had heard the gurgling cry,
The mad shrill shriek of agony,

Drawn from the writhing lips of pain
Of those who with convulsive hand
Of anguish clutch the bloody sand
In horrid torment, on the plain
Of battle, whose red drops of rain
In ghastly dews distil and fall
Upon death's dreadful carnival ;—
Had seen, and, save the soul supplied
One passing sigh for those who died,
Had stood with unmoved heart, firm brow
And steady hand ;—he trembled now.

* * * *

Oh ! who shall see a woman's sorrow,
And still a stern composure borrow ?
Behold the weakness love supplies
Gush from those dim and downcast eyes ;
See the white bosom surge, as though
Some tempest rocked it to and fro,—
The broken word, the struggling sob,
The pang of parting's swifter throb,
The unguarded words of grief that slip
Through that pale, trembling, piteous lip ;
Oh, he who weeping never knew,
Nor blanched with coward Terror's hue,

Nor knows of sorrow, save by name,
Might well weep here,—nor were it shame.

xv.

And Roland stood, though scarce he wept,—
For one short moment, if there crept
A sudden dimness, it is fled,
And perishes the tear unshed.
But the deep shudder of the breast
Proclaimed the strong man's sorrow best ;
The look, the manly colour blenched,
The sun-lit eye in shadow quenched,
Told Love's full cup swelled to the brim ;
And that strong hand so tightly clenched
Declared the hate he felt for him
Whose splendid towers around him soared,
As strong-hearted as their lord.

He spoke : " Vain voice it is that calls
My feet to stay within these walls,
Oh ! were thy prayers indeed to me,
Oh ! had I but the mastery
Of my own fate, no second prayer
Should wail its wildness in my ear,
No tears sprung forth from passion's bed

Should sorrowing for my loss be shed,
No sigh should shudder through these veins
So tremulous with heart-wrung pains,
Which having caused, I would endure,
And share a grief I cannot cure.
Dost thou not think my spirit yearns
To grant the prayer my reason spurns?
Oh, think'st thou not thy cry of pain
Rang far into my anguished brain?
Do I not feel a wondrous bliss
Steal upward like a fever, deep
With slumber lulling Thought to sleep,
Whispering that the world shall pass,
Praise and censure fade like grass,
Glory and ambition die,
Ere again life will supply
The rapture of one hour like this?
'This,' it cries, this Spirit of Trance,
'This is Time's meridian chance,
When the golden fruit hangs low,
Tempting with its roseate glow,
And dripping juice, the thirsty lip—
Only fools would let it slip.
This,' it cries, 'oh, this is worth

All the hollow praise of earth
Lavished since the stars had birth ;
This is worth an age of scorn,
Which, like lightning, quickly dies,
By its own vehemence torn.
What, and if the world shall sing
Songs replete with mockeries,
Jibing laughter, following after,
Like a vulture on the wing,
For the hunt of cowards born,
Have not I a right to laugh,
While the draught of bliss I quaff,
Holding thee close to my side,
Living in the love-lit dream
Of fair joys unfolded wide,
Fairer than the earth beseem ?'

* * * * *

Alas ! vain are the prayers which wait
Where Destiny sits robed in state,
Vain dying sigh, vain maddening moan
Gasped out to those still lips of stone,
Vain anguished supplication, where
Eternal deafness answers prayer.
We cry : but in that chilly ear

All sound is echoless and sere ;
We listen,—our own words reply,
And mock to madder agony.
In that cold brow no mind is hid,
There lies no light beneath that lid ;
Lofty, wide open, its stares on
Through wrecks of generations gone.
A thousand perish in their pride,—
In moveless calm those eyes stand wide :
We die,—still grows the pitiless gaze,
No mercy flushes through the face.
No pulse those frozen arteries moves,
Nor motion meets the eye of man,
Save when, with finger stern and wan,
From joy and home, to death and doom,
It beckons him from all he loves.
And oh ! while yet I speak, behold
I see that gesture grim and cold,
I feel the spell upon me brood,
So shunned, yet darkly understood ;
A few more lingering moments ; see,
O God ! the hand is summoning me.”

XVI.

They stood : the lonely moonbeam's lessening ray
Grew fainter, and the pallid steeds of day
Along the eastern heaven began to tread
With flashing footsteps, and with motion fleet,
The ebbing clouds and stars beneath their feet ;
And the mists rolled away in banners red.
The merry hall had hushed its revelry
In night and sleep, who kissed each quiet face,
And gently closed the over-wearied eye ;
The multitude had passed upon their ways,
And where mirth dwelt there echoed but the cry
Of the shrill cricket through the silent place.
It was not day, but it was that sweet hour
When day and night for one short moment meet
Like pilgrims who embrace, with lingering feet
That fain would tarry in the restful bower
That breaks the desert ; or like streams that pour
Their mingled currents down the mountain steep,
With roar of thunder terrible and deep,
In a still lake, where sleep the shadows gray,
And the great lotus leaves incessant shake
Upon the trembling wave, ere on its way

The unresting torrent doth impetuous break,
Making the solitude once more awake
With busy echoes of its brawling lay.
The cool dull sky grows gayer with the hue
Of sunlight ; one by one each silver star
Fades out, and shaking with their notes the dew,
The birds, heaven's choristers, awake from far.
The slanting rays spread like a crimson stream
Along the dim horizon, where a road
Of glory opens, and the chariots gleam
With radiant speed, while the advancing god
Moves onward : a fresh breeze is now abroad,
The young sweet leaves rejoice with rustling sighs
Of pleasure, and the passive cattle rise
To view the joyous dawn with meek glad eyes.
Such hour it was ; and still in converse sad
Into each other's eyes the lovers look,
Nor mark the breaking of the morning glad,
With dyes of light, and chant of waking brook.
Theirs only 'tis to know the mute distress,
The speechless feelings which for ever dwell
In love that lingers on its last caress,
And faintly breathes in sighs the fond farewell.

XVII.

“ Ere twelve months shall pass with speed,
Back shall come the coal-black steed,
Back from Paynim War shall come
To thy heart thy Roland home,
Crowned with many a daring deed.

He who ever shields the brave,
Lord of Hosts, who armed stand
Round thy throne, a warrior band,
Shelter me on land and wave,
When the crowds of foemen press,
When the cry of battle rings,
Or the fever's baleful wings
Wave above the wilderness !

He who holds the battle's bolt,
Guard my heart from dark revolt,
Nerve my strength to strike, and gain,
Though by martyrdoms of pain,
Wounds and patient bravery,
Victory which ne'er shall die !

He whose are the powers of life,
Spare me in the desperate strife,
Lest the trembling, flickering fire,

Dying downward, shall expire !

He who guides the ways of men,
When the march of death rings loud,
Echoing to the furthest cloud,
Trampling steeds, and maddened shout
From the battle's furious rout,—
God of battles, keep me then,
Bring me back to claim a bride,
Who shall never quit my side !—
Vow dost thou require ? Our love
Written is in courts above ;
To those courts I turn my prayer.
By yon living throne I swear,
When the wave of war is spent,
When the battle's fought and won,
When the rolling year is sent,
With another summer's sun,
To proclaim the winter done,
Discrowned winter dead and gone,
To return with fonder spirit,
Thy heart's hoard of love to inherit.

And, if when the time is flown,
If, oh if,—my faltering tone
Tells how all my heart stands still

With such thought of brooding ill,—
If when the twelve months are sped,
I am numbered with the dead,
Cloven by some Paynim sword,
Sleep beneath the deep-dyed sward,—
Still my soul shall rise and snap
Every bond in twain, and her
Inmost vital essence stir
Underneath the dust of death :
She shall burst the shades that wrap
Her cold eyes in ghastly gloom
With the bandage of the tomb,
And shall breathe immortal breath.
Fleeing from the ebon throne
Where drear Pluto reigns alone,
Swift from the red scene of slaughter,
Swift across the wailing water
Of that deathly river pale,
Rolling through the shadowy vale,
I will come : and where we stand
Breast to breast, and hand in hand,
I will walk in mortal guise ;
Thou shalt hail me with thine eyes.
Far from earth we'll mount, we'll fly.

Far beyond yon bending sky,
Far beyond the furthest shore
Of the land where stars have shone,
Where the soul is pained no more,
Where the lips forget to moan.
Far away,—our brows still pale
With the solemn pain of death,
We will pass, while Asrael,
Spreading his strong wings beneath,
Shall uplift, and bear us on
To a city like the sun,
To an open shining portal,
Like a bridge, beneath whose span
Sunlit, happy waters run,
Tides of beings made like man,
Glad with joy, each hour begun :
There dead lovers meet at last,
When life's agony is past,
And are crowned with love immortal."

XVIII.

" Even so : the word is spoken,
I accept the ghostly token.
I am brave ; my woman's heart

May weep fast at parting's smart,
But my woman's will is strong,
And a portion doth belong
To my soul, which curbs the tear,
And shall when a danger's near
Disenfranchise it of fear.
Look ! I shudder not : I'm strong
To endure, and no soft song
Of syren ease shall lull to sleep
The watch my anxious eyes shall keep
For the lips, where my last kiss
Doth imprint its seal of bliss.

In my veins I feel the fires
Of a hundred valiant sires,
In my soul, by mystic rite,
Strength with softness shall unite ;
To each power that there doth beat,
I will thy one name repeat,
Till each faculty shall learn
To look after thee and yearn ;
Each shall like a spirit fleet
Speed upon the buoyant air,
Tire not, turn not anywhere
Where shall press thy wandering feet.

Wounded on the battle plain,
Thou shalt hear a soothing strain,
Such as trumpets never had.
Thou shalt think the stars look sad
On thy torment ; and the breeze,
Like a sister on her knees
Doth beside thee fan thy brow ;
And when thus thou dream'st, then know
In that soft wind breathing low,
In those star-beams sadly fair,
In the thrill my name shall send
Through thy slowly heaving breast,
Like sweet music whispering rest,
I am present ; on the air
My freed soul doth float, and bend
Close beside thee to the end,
With cool kisses for thy brow,
Such as I do give thee now.
Now we part, perchance for ever,
Again thy loving arms place under
This frail form ; no power shall sever
Our two wedded souls, or sunder.
Thou art passing, all is over ;
And I seem to see thee go

Where the dim shades darkest hover,
Where the lonely shadows flow
Like black waters o'er the gladness
Of the times which we have known,
Leaving barren waves of sadness
Murmuring with a mournful moan.
I stretch out my hand in greeting,
But the shadows roll between.
Thine is vanished : in that meeting
Dies all save that which hath been.
One more kiss. Oh deeper, deeper,
Drink my soul this final bliss,
Ere I wake like dreaming sleeper,
To discover all I miss.
Now farewell ! the vow is taken,—
Mine is weeping, thine is war ;
Both are love and faith unshaken ;—
Fly ! there dies the Morning Star."

XIX.

One moment more spent in a mute caress,
Such as doth drain, and leave the sick heart weak
With an eternal sadness, a distress
Corroding all the soul, which like a bud

Droops canker-eaten to its very core.
From those two brows hath fled the vigorous blood,
Poisoned and parched with parting's bitterness.
No tearful vows, no sobbing words they speak,
Nor either their sad fate with speech deplore,
Or on the burning bliss of silence break
With raptures eloquence can ill express.
There is a wandering joy that lives in grief,—
The greater grief the greater too the bliss ;
The soul distressed finds in this thought relief,
Life only can supply one hour like this.

And all is silent too in earth and sky,
As though inanimate things would sympathise
With human sorrows which can never die.
The winds of day unsounding onward fly,
The light is tremulous as if with sighs ;
The little birds are quiet, or their song
Is but a single note wailing and long,
Which burdens the sad air, and echoing dies
In the still grove, o'er which a mist is hung
Which hides great Nature's wonder-weeping eyes,
That ever watch with mother's love the young.

One moment : their hot lips together pressing,
Seem like two dewdrops melted into one ;

Their eyes into each other's are confessing
A deep devotion changeless as the sun.
Two tears have fallen from two founts, and slow
In their salt course they travel, and they meet
To mingle undivided evermore ; And so,
Cries Love, from his imperial seat,
Have these loves met, and must for ever flow
Absorbed in one another ! Tearful pair,
The time is speeding ! lo, the hour is here
When ye must separate, nor can the prayer
Importunate postpone the parting near.
A picture rises. In his girding arms
Cathrina lies, a lovely world of charms,
Nor can he gather courage to resign
A load so motionless and so divine.
The picture fades for ever,—all is done.
He turns, he lingers,—on the winding stone
His footstep lessens echoless and far ;
In that long moment ages crowded are,
Which only answer as they pass, " He's gone,"
To her who gazes desolate—and alone.

XX.

He is gone : and the step of his steed flying fast
Rings back like a knell on the fresh-stirring blast ;
The stars, sympathising, grow pale every one,
And every sad echo proclaims he is gone.

Swift in the still sky flash the signals of light ;
On a turret she stands, she is straining her sight
To catch the last glimpse of her love as he goes
To the land of the sun and the steel of his foes.

See ! he pauses one moment, his speed he has stayed,
He is gazing this way, he is waving his blade ;
Farewell ! round the bend of the road he is gone,
And weeping she cries, " I am left, left alone ! "

Oh sweet as the spot where the violet has grown,
Oh sad as the thought that its fragrance is flown,
Is the mixed sense of gain and of anguish that dwell
In the last heavy sigh of that hopeless farewell.

Farewell ! Oh the anguish that breathes in the thought,
Loved we fondly and long, yet now it is nought ;
Loved we coldly and little, no power may atone
For the slights and chill answers of hours that are gone.

Farewell ! that cold brow never more may we press
With the lingering kiss or the clinging caress ;
The watching, the strife, all but weeping is o'er,
Buried deep in the grave of the dead *Nevermore*.

Farewell ! Oh the thought of affection we felt,
But shrouded with pride no affection could melt ;
The word that went forth like a soul-killing frost,
The love that awoke but to know it was lost.

Once the spirit stood close on the brink of a bliss
That enticed ; but the serpent of self, with a hiss
Leapt forth from the fruit, and a blindfolded hate
Poisoned love with a curse that vanished too late.

Remember'st thou not when *thy* life was yet young,
How thou lov'st with a love such as poets have sung,
But the flame died away, and the altar was cold
With a winter that left the soul withered and old ?

Remember'st thou not, ere thy spirit was stained
With baser desire, how a faith unattained
Rose upward,—a vision that held thee in spell,
But died with the breath of thy boyhood's farewell ?

Farewell ! Oh thou fondest and saddest of words !
What anguish and ecstasy throb in thy chords !
Lost faces throng upward, dead joys live again,
Like nerves but once bruised that are always in pain.

He has ridden away, yet still at the gate
A maiden in white will linger and wait,
And where the steep tower comes nearest the sky,
One watcher is standing with sorrowful eye.

He has ridden away ; but still on the spot
Where the last word was spoken that blended their lot,
Where night showers her blackness most dark on the
earth,

Where hushed is the song, and invades not the mirth,

Where the linden bends low, and the poplar doth
shake

In wavering reflections above the calm lake,
And darksome, and deep is the sleep of the water,
Still glides like a shadow gray Arvelon's daughter.

END OF CANTO I.

CANTO II.
CROSS AND CRESCENT.

CANTO II.

CROSS AND CRESCENT.

I.

Now the hour of morn is nigh,
Darkly lowers the thunderous sky.
Hark ! there sounds the clarion's cry,—
Rouse thee, rouse thee, soldier brave !
Shrink not thou from agony,
Thou shalt conquer or shalt die,
Thou shalt with thy courage buy
Victory or the grave.

* * * *

To arms ! to arms !
Ye sons of fathers bold,
The might, 'mid war's alarms,
Prove of the names ye hold :
And if to-night the torch's light

Flash o'er your features cold,
Let not the dirging bell be tolled,
Nor the mournful knell be knolled,
But round your wounds of victory
Strain fast the torn flag of the Free !

To arms ! to arms !
Ye soldiers of the cross !
For you no silken charms,
Which meaner minds engross :
From tent and field, with sword and shield,
Brave sons of Christ, arise !
Chant, chant your battle-song in triumph to the skies !
For in its last infirm decade
The Crescent glimmers ; it doth fade
And perish where the swords gleam bright
Beneath the Cross's living light !

Arise ! arise !
The banner is unfurled !
Beneath the morning skies
It floats in gold impearled.
Draw the sword, exchange the word.
Hear ye not the trumpet pealing ?

See ye not the priests are kneeling?
On !—and if to-night ye lie
Where the many-wounded die,
Immortality shall claim
Soldiers of the Saviour's name !

II.

Then rose the loud *Te Deum* to the sky,
As mighty waters swelled the solemn sound ;
The silent hills a sudden voice have found,
And to the chanting multitude reply ;
Their helms lie glittering on the dewy ground,
Beside him, shining, each man's sword doth lie
Disused, until again the bugle notes resound.

Then falls a silence ; o'er the distant hill
The last majestic notes of music fade.
Each upturned face the unspoken prayer doth fill,
And o'er each brow there hangs a solemn shade.
No sound is heard among the thousands,—still
As though the deathly angel there had stayed
His brooding wings, waiting the awful word to kill.

What sight sublimer since the earth was made,
And fair creation her first lustre shed,
Was seen, than where in broad array was spread
The kneeling thousands of the Great Crusade?
Hushed, all unheard, the voiceless prayer was said,—
Perchance a sudden tear bedewed some blade,
Quivered and passed ;—and the last prayer has up-
ward sped.

For even here there wakes some softer thought ;
The spirit shuddering in its deep suspense,
Some tenderer memory recollects, and hence
It wanders like a bird to haunts once sought,
Unbidden penetrates the dread immense.
Where shall it be when this day's fight is fought ?
Bodied in flesh, or bodiless ? and whence
Speeds it, clothed in this garb immortal newly wrought ?

The silence almost dreadful has become,
So long the supplication, rapt the prayer.
But hark ! a bell is rousing the dead air,
Among the ranks there creeps a rising hum,
They stir, they rise ; yet still there lingers there
A shade of something serious with some.
Meanwhile o'er all the field there wakes the warlike drum.

And then there rose quick cries, and all was life,
As though the sluggish stream should swifter flow
After its brief suspension ; heralds go
From band to band with orders for the strife.
A faster pulse each manly heart doth know :
Far on the hills there shrills the murderous fife,
In the dusk armies of the active Paynim foe.

* * * * *

'Twas noon, as from the tent and battlement
They stalwart marched upon their eager way ;
Tumultuous passions in each heart held sway.
Hope foremost to each brow a lustre lent,
And lit the eye with an enthusiast ray,
And the firm lips in mute defiance bent
As forth they thronged in haste to join the fearful fray.

Then were forgot all signs of evil bode ;
The hearts of love which late o'er them had yearned ;
For in each will one fiery impulse burned,
While with proud step the crouching earth they trode,
Or to the skies their stern-set faces turned,
Hymning up prayers for victory to their God,
Not knowing that ere-night would close o'er them the
sod.

The war-horse neighed, and fierce the drum beat out,
The silken flag flew free upon the breeze,
Rustling as if in joy at their release.
Then loud there rose the universal shout
Heard many a league across the land and seas :
“ Behold, they come, they come ! On, on, and seize
Those banners false, or perish in the battle’s furious
rout ! ”

As ocean’s wave, though long in bondage kept,
With doubly maddened, deep-resounding roar
Breaks forth indignant trampling the far shore,
And the wild waters, which so long have slept,
Arise, and their hoarse turbulence outpour,
So, rising lion-like, one dread cry tore
The shivering skies, then sank, and on the grim host
swept.

III.

Jerusalem ! Jerusalem ! thy ancient glory stands
Disconsolate, thy people tread the soil of foreign lands ;
Thy temples lie all tenantless beneath the stately palm,
Among thy echoing courts have died the timbrel and
the psalm :

Thy sons again their fetters wear, and groan a servile
 race,
Thy daughters hide with funeral veils the beauty of
 their face,
Thy children by strange waters sit, and sadly weep
 among
The tyrants who behold their tears, and ask of them a
 song.
Despoiled thy glories, see thy land a desert wilder-
 ness,
Thy vineyards trampled where no hand the bleeding
 tendrils dress ;
Thy cities silent—perished now the monarch and the
 lover,
Lo ! death and darkness everywhere the dead and
 darkened cover,
And no step stirs, save where at night the shadow
 blackest sleeps ;
Perchance some son of Abraham, with mournful foot-
 step creeps
To that sad spot where nightly rise the strange wild
 sounds of wailing,
Like requiems chanted for the dead,—ah ! requiems
 unavailing ;

And there, beside those holy stones, by lonely starlight
gilded,
Of that vast house which Solomon in all his glory
builded,
He lingers, filling all the night with solitary sighing ;
Upon the rocks his cold lips cling, on them his cheek
is lying,
Their hoary brow with salt, salt drops he hastes anew
to christen,
Speaks to them as if their dumb hearts could sympa-
thize or listen,
On their rough bosom places one whose heart within
is broken,
Until, as morning breaks, he flies, and leaves behind no
token
Save the thick tears which everywhere upon their sur-
face glisten
Like nightly dew, but not from stars and twilight
heavens given,
Dew fallen from the firmament of souls with sorrow riven.

Jerusalem ! Jerusalem ! dim is thy former glory ;
Thy name is lost,—thy misery now, alas ! is all thy
story ;

Thy power no more, thy memory alone, man's thought
engages,
Thy palaces are perished in the dust of warring
ages ;
Thy holy place is trodden by rude heathen feet un-
hallowed,
Thine ark of wingèd seraphim the yawning earth hath
swallowed.
Gone is thy greatness, gone the place where the She-
chinah tarried,
Perished thy marble capitols, with silent labour quar-
ried,
And of that boast fane, which had no equal, for no
other
By heavenly architecture rose, not one stone crowns
another.
Lo ! far and wide thy people wander, pointed at and
hated,
From sunny clime, from native home, from pity
separated,
A scattered race, who were as stars, a byword and
derision,
Whose hopeless hearts yet linger round the Messianic
vision

With mornings fraught so full with woes they only
leave a yearning
That the slow hours may swifter speed and hasten
night's returning ;
With nights so long with fruitless tears, and dark with
doom and warning,
The restless heart can only moan, " Would God that
it were morning ! "

And these were they before whom men bowed down
in fear and wonder,
Whose God sat throned in fiery clouds within the place
of thunder.
Around His feet the lightnings meet : before, beneath,
and under
Are waters, darkness, smoke, and flame in glowing
masses wreathing.
He listened, and Jehovah heard His people's humblest
breathing ;
He rose and spoke, His thunders woke, His quench-
less arrows rattle, [battle.
He rode the cherubim and flew to fight His people's
The hosts of heaven, His ministers, in solemn state
attended,

Beneath His chariot wheels were chained the powers
of hell suspended.
The wingèd winds His horses were, the bowing heavens
bent o'er Him,
The pillars of the trembling earth in terror shook
before Him.
And these were they whose whispered prayer the Lord
of Hosts did waken,
And for whose conquest all the powers of heaven and
earth were shaken.
And these were they who chanted songs full of
divinest feeling,
Who uttered burning thoughts which bowed a world
in reverent kneeling,
Whose minstrel smote from out his harp such strains
of joy and sadness,
The world still listens while he sings, in mingled grief
and gladness,
And asks but in one solemn hour, when all the pulses
flutter,
When the lip no more its prayer or its command can
utter ;
When naught is left save failing breath, dim glances,
tears, and sighing,

That Judah's harp still sound, and soothe with songs
the pang of dying.
Oh ! these were they—who now are left despoiled and
few in number,
Who know a wanderer's stealth, a fugitive's uneasy
slumber,
Whose nation, once the pride of earth and the
esteemed of heaven,
Spend trembling days, on every side to fire and
slaughter given,
And o'er whose city, where should dwell like some
fair star thou viewest,
The Cross of Him who suffered there,—their best,
divinest, truest,
There hangs, as if to mock the Name which angels
worship bowing,
The scornful Crescent, and the Arab's flag in splendour
flowing !

IV.

I.

“ On with the fight ! The Cross's might
Shall crown this day with glory,
Long ages that know not the light
Shall learn the wondrous story.

Men yet unborn, men yet to come
Shall shout, with joyous weeping,
The deeds of those who in the tomb
Of battle deep are sleeping.

II.

“ Oh ! this day’s name shall be the boast
Of all succeeding races ;
Its fame shall spread from coast to coast,
And kindle in all faces
The light of valour ; and old men
Shall crowd each city’s portal,
And chant the Christian victory when
We are with Christ immortal.

III.

“ Ye fail, ye fly ! oh ! hear the cry
Of angels, spirits wailing,
Who throng the arches of the sky
And watch with tears your failing.
Oh ! think of Him who bore the pain—
The more than mortal anguish ;
For His dear sake press on again,
Nor let your valour languish !

IV.

“Ye strike,—they fall ;—a funeral pall
Becomes their banner ample ;
They totter,—on ! Oh ! heed the call,
Your foes in triumph trample ;
Raise, raise the cry, ‘ *They fall ! they fly !* ’
One moment, stand one minute,—
In His great name who made the sky
Charge ! charge !—and we shall win it !”

V.

The call is heard, and is not heard in vain,
Loud, louder peal the bugles through the plain ;
No need that stirring summons to repeat
When valour drives the heart at fever heat.
“France—Christ—Jerusalem !” Who hears the name
And feels not in his blood a sudden flame,
Draws not his sword, swells not the answering shout,
Spurs not his steed to join the furious rout,
And quench in Moslem blood that speechless ire
To which delay adds but a fiercer fire ?
On, on they throng, now victors, now pursued,
Encrimsoned, bleeding, and all carnage-hued.

One moment on the stream some brighter helm
Glitters, then swift the rolling waves o'erwhelm ;
Some floating crest upon the tumult tossed
Sweeps onward—totters—gleams again—is lost !
The smoke-cloud clears, the Cross is gleaming high,
It darkens,—deeper, hoarser rings each cry.
Half-blinded, bleeding, still there toss red hands
Striking with death whoever nearest stands.
Hark ! louder rolls the Moslem, "Allah Hu !"
The curved swords quivering smite, the banners blue
And yellow onward rush ; the solid rock
Might splinter with the strength of such a shock ;
Then back they fall, even as the waves whose spray
All fruitless fills with rage the narrow bay.
So have I seen two wrestlers locked in strife,
And watching them, two spectres—Death and Life.
Each muscle starts, quivers each knotted vein :
Behold ! he falls—recovers—stands again !
They pause a moment, glare with blood-shot eyes,
Again are locked : the straining sinews rise,
The broad breasts labour, thicker heaves each breath,
The grasp grows looser with the touch of Death.
The rolling eye is dark, its vision dim,
A shameful weakness thrills each failing limb,

As in a very agony of strength,
The stronger bursts the death-grasp of his foe
With one vast effort ; overcome at length,
Behold the vanquished in his agony
Of noble shame, far keener than the throe
Of death that drains the great heart of its woe,
While o'er the dead the victor stands, his eye
Scarce calm enough to see his victim die.

VI.

And Roland, he was there ; where danger burst
He hastened and was everywhere the first.
A coal-black steed, as swift as night, he strode,
And hundreds followed where he hewed a road.
High 'mid the multitude his helmet blazed ;
His very foes stood still and wondering gazed.
Where thickest met the swords he rose unwounded ;
Alone he fought when the retreat had sounded ;
Like some proud stag the dogs have driven to bay,
Who pauses, ignorant of weak dismay,
Draws breath, then, gathering all his strength for one
Last effort, breaks the circle, and is gone,
So warred he ; on his mailed bosom shone
A golden cross, set thick with many a gem,
Which spelt the mystic word, " Jerusalem ;"

And, underneath his chain-wrought armour vest,
A dearer token, sweeter spell, did rest,—
An amulet, set round with amethysts,
A triple row, resplendent as the mists
Of morning light which deck the mountain's brow.
Within, six diamonds cast a subtle glow,
And in the inmost circle is a ring
Which round one precious finger late did cling ;
The half is gone,—'tis warm upon that breast
Which oft its vows of love to him confessed.
The half is his,—oceans the fragments sever,
Till ring and souls shall be made one for ever.

VII.

The night is falling : through the sky
The shadowy steeds of darkness fly ;
So fleet are they, no twilight there
Has time to linger in the air.
All day beneath the blinding glow
The strife has thickened, to and fro,
The crimson tide has ebb'd and flow'd
In victory, defeat, and blood ;
And now, swift, silent, like a veil,
Darkness has closed above the vale.

The stars shine clear o'er Hattin's hill,
Tiberias slumbers dusk and and still,
So still the silence seems to mock
The wounded in that fatal shock,
The dying, who unheeded lie,
Their faces turned to the far sky,
Mute with a voiceless agony.
See, where yon rocky height is spread
The living fly; the nobler dead
They bear within their arms, and place
Each tenderly upon the sand,
While a torn flag, with trembling hand,
They draw o'er each disfigured face.
Beset, surrounded, still there stand
Some remnants of the broken band,
Their standard with its cross blood red
Still flutters in the gloom o'erhead;
And at its foot, where priests surround,
Upon a loose and sandy mound
There rests a holy piece of wood,
Rugged, deep-seamed, and stained with blood,
Which fond tradition says is part
Of that accursed yet sacred tree
Which bore the Christ, when agony

Rent in twain His gentle heart.
Those recent drops of gore, yet warm,
Are His who with untiring arm
Has borne its blessed weight, nor loosed
His grasp till fast his life-blood oozed ;
And the disciple's life was poured
On that same cross where bled his Lord.
Still where some deeper blots abound,
Deep-driven, a broad-edged nail is found ;
And there abides so dark a stain
No power can draw it from the grain.
It pierced His flesh,—oh ! long ago,
That nail drew forth the cry of woe ;
And lo ! a wondrous miracle,
Divinely wrought, attested well.
Those holy stains, no longer dim,
Wax red as is the ruby's glow !
Chanting loud a saintly hymn,
Lo ! the awe-struck priests along
All the line the emblem show ;
While the blood-red tint more strong
Seems to tremble into flame
At each mention of His name,—
A token sure, a sacred sign

Their cause, their conflict is divine.
Shall not pains and wounds be dross,
Shall not hunger, thirst, or death,
Mangled frame or choking breath,
Scarce be thought worth gain or loss
By him who views his Master's Cross? .

VIII.

The morning breaks, the war-cry wakes,
The sound of hoofs the silence shakes ;
Ere yet the light grows full or clear
The drums proclaim the conflict near,
And the strife begins again.
But look, oh ! look,—by this gray light
There seem more foes than yester night ;
Around, beneath, the shaded eye
Fresh thousands stirring can descry ;
Alas ! to fight, to hope, is vain ;
Far, far and wide along the plain
The armies of the Paynim stir :
Fresh thousands flock with bloody spur,
Fresh thousands gather round the few,
The last, the tried, the brave, the true,
Who dare not turn in fear to fly,

But dare to suffer and to die.
The armèd sea, a glittering waste,
Rolls onward in impetuous haste ;
The human sea rolls on in wrath
Like waves around one lonely rock,
Where some calm giant waits the shock,
Strong in the memories which he hath ;—
Some Titan, last of a long race,
Who looks with broad amazèd face
Of scornful wonder on the crowd,
Thronging round with menace loud ;
Who calmly, 'mid the murderous roar,
Girds on his sword with temper proud,
But knows not that his reign is o'er.
See him ! the hero matched in fight
Against the myriad's murderous might.
His lofty heart begins to swell
With that proud power he knows so well ;
The multitude dare scarce advance
Beneath the fire of that high glance.
He strikes,—one moment, see, they pause ;
Their hue, their trembling tell the cause.
Then thousands matched against the one—
Behold, the martyrdom's begun !

Struck breathless, fall'n before his foes,
Faint, wounded with a hundred blows,
Mists that wide eye of anguish fill.
With lip, proud in endurance still,
The death-pang comes, and cowards cheer
The fall of him who taught them fear.
E'en so the last of that brave crew,
Who victory but flight ne'er knew,
Fell fighting bravely where they stood,
And sunk by numbers unsubdued.

IX.

* Thrice, thrice around that sacred slope

* The battle from which these incidents are derived was that fought at Tiberias, in the second Crusade, A.D. 1186, between Saladin and Guy de Lusignan. "The army was drawn up, and the march began toward Tiberias without delay. The movement of the Christian army fell in entirely with the ardent wishes and plans of Saladin, who had from the first felt confident of victory could he but draw the Franks from their position, and bring on a general battle. On receiving the intelligence from his scouts, he immediately despatched his light troops to harass the Christians on their march, and posted his main army, it would seem, between Tiberias and the hill Hattin. This hill Hattin has long been regarded as the hill on which our Lord sat when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount; and if we admit for a moment this tradition, it becomes a most melancholy

Despair has almost conquered hope ;
Thrice where 'tis said the Saviour spoke,

reflection that one of the most savage and bloody battles that history records was fought in the presence of that hill, from which were once heard the Divine words, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'

"The night was dreadful. The Christians, already tormented with thirst, stood in constant dread of a night attack. The Saracens approached close to the camp, and set fire to the dry shrubs and herbage round about, the heat and smoke of which served still more to increase the distress of the Franks. The latter passed the whole night under arms, anxiously awaiting the dawn. But the morning brought no consolation ; they saw themselves upon this rocky plain, surrounded by the hostile forces of Saladin, from whom there was no escape except in the result of a battle. The result of such an action could not be doubtful.

"We cannot enter into the details of this battle, of which we have not very perfect or consistent accounts. The carnage of the Christians was most horrible, not only in the battle, but in the pursuit of those who fled. One noble portion of the Christian host, led by the king in person, found means to retire to the top of the hill Hattin itself, and drove back the Saracens as they attempted to ascend. Three times did the latter storm the height, and it was not until they had set fire to the wood, that they were able to get possession of it ; and the Christians were made prisoners, or driven headlong over the steep precipice on the northern side. Among those who surrendered was Lusignan himself, the Grand Master of the Templars, and the Bishop of Lydda, the last bearer of the holy Cross, the Bishop of Ptolemais

To bless the peaceful and the good,
Has flowed in seas the Christian blood,
Has met the battle's wave and broke.
And now behold there spreads a smoke,
There leaps a sudden flame of fire ;
Haste ! ere the hillside be the pyre
Of valour owned and used in vain ;
Haste ! covet not the martyr's pain.
The Cross is taken, all is lost !
Thicker throng the yelling host ;

having been killed. The Cross itself had already fallen into the hands of the enemy."—KITTO's *History of Ancient and Modern Jerusalem*, chap. iii.

"A fragment of the true Cross, intrusted to the Knights of the Holy Sépulchre, was placed on a hillock, around which the broken squadrons repeatedly rallied. But the Crescent, supported by more numerous and stronger hands, triumphed on the plain of Tiberias. The Christians were defeated with great loss, and the piece of holy wood, in which they had put their trust, was snatched from the grasp of the Bishop of Acre."—*Palestine ; or, The Holy Land*, by the Right Rev. M. Russell, LL.D., chap. ii.

It is of course very evident that I have not adhered strictly to the actual details of this battle ; but perhaps "the not very perfect or consistent accounts" thereof may excuse me ; and if that valuable and liberal provision known as "poet's licence" is not wholly withdrawn in these modern days, I shall welcome that as an auxiliary apology."

Around, beneath, they fire the bush,
Through the smoke the horsemen push.
Haste ! it is vain to struggle more,
'Tis done, the great crusade is o'er !
O scattered few, be brave, be true !
Though hope is past, fight to the last.
When one, by multitudes assailed,
Succumbs, you cannot say he failed ;
When bravery has done its all,
When a lone band of heroes fall,
Trampled beneath ten thousand feet,
Greater than victory is defeat !
One scene, one conquest, still is ours :
We yield not though fate overpowers ;
One heritage untouched remains,
Valour which cowardice ne'er stains ;
One greater, nobler victory—
To die, and yet unmoved to die !

X.

'Tis over,—all is finished now ;
The living to the victor bow,
The happier dead are fast asleep
Where mortals never wake to weep ;

The dying pray, a parting boon,
That death may come, and come full soon.
The Cross is taken ; he who bore
Its sacred burden is no more,
The standard, stained with dust and gore,
Is overthrown, its glory gone ;
And yet cold fingers round its wood
So firm in their death-grasp were glued,
The Moslem sword hacked through the bone
Of that brave hand whose faithful trust
Death could not vanquish, ere there burst
The cry which told the prize their own.
Death spreads his ebon wing, and o'er
The silent host he hastes to brood,
The vulture scents from far his food,
And ere the mangled flesh is cold
It quivers in his deadly hold.
The third night darkens grim and chill ;
Odours of death the dark air fill.
Scarce dare we tread lest we should press
Some heart in its long helplessness ;
Scarce look, lest shuddering we descry
The staring gaze of some dead eye,
Half-open, stony, vacant, dread,—

The temple whence the priest has fled ;
And e'en the monk, whose pious breath
Should soothe the awfulness of death,
Comes not to comfort,—he is slain,
Or bleeds with thousands on the plain.

XI.

And he, that daring form of pride,
Whom woman's love hath sanctified ;
He whose strong heart has owned the spell
Of that mild name he loves so well,
The mystic rapture, deep and strange,
Of living love's divine exchange,—
Oh ! where is he, whose hurried vow
Awaits its long fulfilment now,
Whose troth, sworn deep in Arvelon's towers,
Before the veiled face of Fate,
And registered by higher powers,
Shall e'en in Death be consummate ?
See where the dead are thickest spread,
And deepest glooms the mist o'erhead,
One form is lying, faint and dying,
Silent, motionless, unsighing.
His helm is broken, his dark brow

Is pale with mortal anguish now ;
His armour is blood-stained and battered,
His sword within his hand is shattered.
In vain he strives to loose the clasp
Of that clove helmet's brazen hasp ;
In vain he hears the waters dash
Upon the shore with soothing plash,—
'Tis not for him,—his lips are dry,
His failing heart can scarcely sigh ;
The lights of life beneath that brow
Are flickering fitfully and low,
Pale, speechless, prostrate,—still there move
Those blackened lips, as though they love
Some word which life so oft hath blessed,
In death it shall be last confessed.
And in that hand, whose touch is cold,
Some dearer charm he seems to hold,
Some token of departed bliss.
He touches it with icy kiss,
He gazes fondly, holds it high
Between his dim eye and the sky,
And for one moment you might deem
The bloody strife some evil dream,
Such strength seems suddenly to fill

Those languid limbs, those pulses chill,
Such rapture gleams in that faint gaze,
Such sudden light illumines his face.
Alas ! and full as sudden fades,
For darker creep those sombre shades,
Swifter the ebbing pulses throb,
More deep, more frequent, comes that sob,
That rattle which foretells the end
Which we so slowly comprehend ;
That shadow deep, mysterious, drear,
Which speaks the final moment near ;
The change which clouds the dying cheek,
Herald of that we dare not speak ;
That awful pause of hushed suspense
Just ere the spirit hurries hence ;
While, like a mighty dark-wove veil,
Amid the death-light stilly pale,
Eternity rolls in between
The future and all that hath been,
The summoned soul of man to sever
From earth, time, life, and pain for ever !

XII.

Oh ! who shall e'er forget the day
When first he looked on death's decay,
When first he saw the darkness deep
Into that human visage creep,
Beheld, and though he knew him not,
Yet saddened to behold his lot,
And silently to think that this
Must be the fate of him, and his ?
But oh ! when it is one whose breath
Seems dearer than all things beneath,
Whose lightest word hath ruled our deeds,
Whose love hath met a thousand needs,
Whose company hath cheered our road,
Unburdened long years of their load,
Made sorrows lighter, joys more sweet,
By fellowship for angels meet,—
Oh ! when 'tis such an one whose breath
Is trembling in the grasp of death,
Whose eye sees not when we stoop low
To wipe the death-dews from the brow ;
Whose lip, when we bend down to press,
Unconscious, gives back no caress,

Nor, pallid, cold, and deathly-hued,
E'en smiles in feeble gratitude,—
Oh ! when 'tis one we *love* who dies,
Who then shall quell our wailing cries,
Who then shall share the grief unspoken,
Or heal the heart with trouble broken ?

Oh ! I could weep to think of this
Daily-acted tragedy
Of human spirits one, made twain
By the fatal course of pain,
Pain that on each heavy sigh
Travels to mortality.
For where'er a man may die,
Be he rocked in arms of bliss,
Or an outcast with but one
Faithful spirit like his own
Watching at his pillow lone,
There is drama mightier far
Than ever challenged poet's breath,
Drama old as sun or star,—
The eternal tragedy of death.
To stand, to see the spirit fly
All heedless to our bitter cry,

To know it longs our voice to own,
Yet cannot save by some low moan,
To see *our life*, our dearest thing
Depart with silent upward wing,
Like some pet bird escaped the care
Of watchful love, which scarce could dare
• To dream of loss ; and then to rise,
To meet no more the loving eyes,
To speak and listen answerless,
The life-like lifeless hand to press,
And with the very form still fair
To know its tenant is not there ;
The precious shape we called our own
Still there, and yet we are alone ;—
Oh, Death ! forgive the anguished cry
Of those who groan beneath thy rule,
That “ *Thou art ruthless, thou art cruel !* ”
Thou dost,—to whom dost thou reply ?

XIII.

Alas ! there bend no tender eyes
O'er the damp couch where Roland dies,
There fall no tears to cool that cheek,
Nor gentle hand, in duties meek,

Doth strive to staunch that living tide
Which with each breath breaks from his side ;
No breast upholds that heavy head,—
The lifeless steed its pillow red ;
None haste with hushed and bated breath
To soothe the painfulness of death
With all those nameless loving deeds
Of service which surround the bed
With smiles, which hide the heart that bleeds :
Alone—unfriended—desolate
He passes through the lonely gate
Of death, into that kingdom dim
Where only love can follow him.
Alone : there come no kindly band
To weep farewell upon the strand
Of that pale sea, whose stormful moan
Swell through the shades of doom unknown.
No friendly group, no faces dear
Light up with love the darkness drear,
Accompanying till the cloud of night
Receives the traveller out of sight ;
To whom, still on the chilly wind,
The echoing farewell message kind
Floats onward with its words of cheer

Through the dark, distinct and clear.
Ah ! no : alone, save that the sky
Bends o'er him not unlovingly,
Save that the stars above his face
Seem solemnly and sad to gaze
From their wide realms of endless life
On him who dies, and dies in strife.
So hath it been, e'en so shall be,
At home, in battle, or at sea,
Where'er the final summons speak,
Where'er the golden bowl may break,
Where'er there heaves the parting moan,
We die—our spirits pass alone ;
And none of those whose love was drink
And meat to our soul's nourishment,
May pass with us the narrow brink
Where flits the spirit when unpent.
Man lives in others' deepest heart :
He dies,—the dearest ties must part ;
In company his years he spends,—
Alone his final path he wends ;
In silence, sadness, agony,
And solitude, he hastes to die.

XIV.

Ah ! dead in the hour of his manhood and pride,
With his sword in his hand, the dead steed at his side,
With the flag o'er his bosom all tattered and torn,
Which gleamed in its glory and might yestermorn,
The bravest young heart that e'er throbbed with the
 high
Pulse of valour to suffer and firmness to die.

Behold him, with features all blood-stained and pale,
Thou maiden who lov'd'st him, behold him and wail !
Ye heroes, his brothers, behold him and weep,
Who early hath tasted the warrior's sleep,
And say, while ye whisper with sob-laden breath,
If nobler e'er entered the kingdom of death ?

Oh ! close that wide eye so stony and cold,
Oh ! cover that bosom with sweet-smelling mould,
Those fingers clasp close in the meekness of prayer,
And tenderly touch those dark ringlets of hair,
And kiss the pale cheek so solemn and dim,
And chant in your kindness a funeral hymn !

What ! are there no watchers to shrive the dead knight
With dying remission and sacrament rite ?
To honour the hero, and o'er his cold brow
In sorrowful reverence pronounce the brave vow ?
Ah well ! God beholds him, to Him hath he gone :
Leave him and mourn not,—he died not alone.

xv.

Shall we say that no one sang
Sad and saintly chaunts for him ?
Though from modern sires we sprang,
Who have not the girth of limb
Warriors had in ancient time,
Yet we value noble deeds,
And applaud the true sublime.
Let us sing a funeral hymn
O'er this youthful form that bleeds,
While the centuries standing by
In their great cathedral weep,—
Cathedral of eternity,
Where the hearts of millions sleep.
Come, begin the solemn strain,
(Angels crowd the holy fane)
All the ages, mute and pale,

With dim torches throng the nave,
While the windy organs wail
With the anthems of the grave !

Come, begin the solemn strain
For a spirit passed from pain,
Round and round the Eternal Dome,
Rising dim above his brow,
Let the echoing music flow
Upward, till it reach God's home.

Come, begin the solemn strain,
In this vast eternal fane,
For a spirit passed from pain !

A REQUIEM.

I.

BURY thy dead !
Their sorrow is over,
The beautiful head
With fresh daisies cover.
Trouble and sorrow
Are out of their sight,
The fear of to-morrow,
The pang of to-night !

II.

The pain and the trouble
That came with the sun,
The agony double
When daylight was done,
The horrible spectres

That came in the night,
The weakness of sickness,
The fever and fright,
And pain that attended
The wavering will ;
Thank God ! it is ended,—
At last they are still !

III.

What ! art thou weeping—
Weeping for him
Whose pale eyes are sleeping
So quiet and dim ;
For him who is master
Of kingdoms at length,
Where comes no disaster
In tyrannous strength ;
Who has what thou hast not,—
Rest for the mind,
In realms where there blows not
The chilly earth-wind,
But hope gives her summer
Incessant and kind ?

IV.

Well ! weep thou, forlorn one ;
It is but right
To sacredly mourn one
Passed out of sight.
Weep, if it please thee,
Thy plentiful tears,
'Twill verily ease thee
Of sadness and fears,
And freshen the daisies
That flourish above
The fair head recumbent
Of him thou didst love ;
The delicate daisies
Who draw sweeter breath,
Beholding Love stronger
Than Anguish or Death.

V.

Bury thy dead !
Their trouble is over :
Round each low head
The seraphim hover,

Kissing those dim eyes
 Closed in their meekness,
Clasping those dear hands
 Folded in weakness,
Till in a glád surprise
 Open those pallid eyes
On the sweet vision
 Of God's happy Paradise,
Splendours Elysian !

CANTO III.
LOVE ETERNAL.

Long days have passed since first I wrote the song
Which hastens to conclusion ; weary days,
Which thought, and pain, and labour have made long.
What time through misty clouds there broke the rays
Of new-woke power and splendour I remember,—
Remember well, for then my leaping heart
Felt a fresh blast fan every dying ember,
And in my pulse a younger life did start ;
It comes again, that mystic, wondrous gladness,
Thrilling the spirit, like the hidden life
Which metamorphoses the mother's sadness
Into divinest hope : and from the strife
Of feeling Song wakes with her cheerful note,
Warbling as in some angel's holy throat.

Once more, once more, awake thy solemn strain,
O pensive harp of sorrow ! Let thy chords
Throb with the awful march of mortal pain,
And weave in melody of pitying words
The final chorus of thy tragedy.
Once more, ere yet the day-spring from on high
Break on my dream, and disenchant my mind
Of these thin shadows which have played their part
Upon the spirit's stage ; for low the wind
Is wailing for the joys which all depart,
And sorrow, muffled in a darksome dress
Of ivy-leaves, comes singing a wild chant,
And into my dim heart doth quickly press,
A sombre, but a heavenly habitant.

CANTO III.

I.

IN yon lone but princely castle,
Hanging o'er the wailing sea,
Lo ! a lady fair and radiant
Watches, oh ! so wearily.
And the ships, for ever sailing,
One by one pass swiftly by,
While the restless waves keep wailing,
And the salt sea breezes sigh.

Watching in yon lofty turret
Of this castle by the sea,
Lo ! this lady's face grows pallid,
Snow-flakes could not whiter be.
And the ships go sailing, sailing
Up and down continually,
While the wintry waters wailing
Dirge their cruel monody.

Paler far than any snow-flake,
Or than any spotless flower,
Grew the lady's lip and forehead,
Vainly watching hour by hour :
Watching, till those darksome wailing
Waters seemed to fill her soul ;
O'er her soul, all sad and failing,
Deathly cold those waters roll.

Still he came not, still he came not ;
Still the ships went sailing by,
And this lady pined and withered,
Pined,—and yet she could not die.
And those waters, wailing ever,
Chanted still their solemn lay,
For the absent who came never,
And for one who pined away.

II.

What was it that those waters told her
In their endless mournful moan ?
Did they tell her Roland suffered,
Unbefriended and alone ?
Did she know it in that hour

When his warlike spirit fled,
 Did some mystic secret power
 Bear the message " He is dead " ?
 Came there not a wondrous writing
 On the tablets of the soul,
 All that sacred temple lighting
 With the fiery open scroll ?
 Did no prophet, clad in terror,
 Seize that fiery open scroll,
 And in words remote from error,
 All its bitterness unroll,—
 All its bitter, bitter tiding,
 Whereat hope and gladness fled,
 All the secret time was hiding,—
 " He is dying,—he is dead " ?

Love these spirits twain united
 In one holy living whole :
 Shall the soul divinely plighted
 Live not in its sister soul ?

Think you the heart may flutter low,
 And that the mind shall fail to know ?
 One limb with powerless languor thrill ?

The other know not of its ill ?
The part shall perish, fade, and pass,
The whole not know the loss it has ?

But one mean pulse the torture fills,
And lo ! in pain such artery thrills ;
The blindness deep in one eye lies,
The other hastes to sympathise,
Pines sightless in the mid-day light,
And shares the blackness and the blight ;
And all this wondrous frame is bound
Together with such subtle, deep,
Far-reaching feelings, still as sleep,
Intangible and light as sound,
But measureless as that, whose wave
Flows ever onward, knows no grave,
That he who touches one slight thread
Has stirred all others to their head,
Has brought a motion into birth,
Which scarce may perish with the earth ;
And just as one whose touch but shakes
Yon spider's web, its beauty breaks,
So he who strikes one chord of pain
Has stirred all nature with the strain,

Or, playing on one note of Time
Has called forth an eternal chime.

III.

Not worse in wealth, not less in dower,
I think may be the spirit's power,
Nor less in limit be the might
Of souls sprung from eternal light.
Oh ! who shall say the deathless spirit
Doth not, in a diviner measure,
The body's sympathies inherit,
Since endless grief, eternal pleasure
In its lightest motions flow ?
Since the truth we cannot know,
Is it but a dreamer's creed,
That the soul is free indeed,
That all senses have full play
Therein, loosed from this heavy clay ?
When speech is silent, and the word
No longer by the ear is heard,
Which once, ere parting drew the moan,
Drank in the very subtlest tone,
Who doubts but that the spirit free
Of flesh may to her fellow flee,

Leave her mean tenement behind,
Out-ride the lightning and the wind,
And in far foreign climes discourse,
With whispers light, through the warm night,
In old familiar intercourse?

So mighty love may wax, doubt not
Weak bonds of flesh may be forgot
In that full flush of liberty
Sprung from the wreck of laws o'erthrown ;
Set common laws of life and thought,
Of trivial days, in custom wrought
To customary ends that die
With needs more potent than their own.
The soul may spread her pinions wide
And only live where thoughts abide :
May still behold beneath Love's sway
The well-known form,—though far away ;
And when o'er him so distant, lost,
As it might seem, some baleful star
Has hovered, some black fate has crossed
His dark'ning path in doomful car,
Or death has smote the fount of life
By battle's steel or murderer's knife,

Lo ! when deep sleep our eyelids hold ;
Within the brain there shall unfold
The theatre, with scene and place,
The deed, the death upon his face,
The gurgling sob, the dagger's gleams,—
All shall the spirit of night and dreams
Paint for us as it is, and was,—
The time, the reason, manner, cause,
Even as of old on Babylon's wall,
Amid the midnight festival,
The armless finger as of flame
Came forth, and traced with steady aim,
In that deep hour, that moment late,
The living awful lines of fate.

III.

She knew it, she whose heart once gay
Now pined in solitude away,
More doleful, for that all around
Pitied but could not heal the wound.
There is a knowledge undefined,
Which misery teaches to the mind.
No human lip has told the tale,
Yet her sad brow is wan and pale ;

No word the dreadful news has broken,—
Love learns its loss by ghastlier token ;
Nor magic skill, nor mystic lore,
Nor hidden art, nor wizard's spell,
Nor man, nor miracle explore
Her secret, or his fate foretell ;
And yet she knows, and knows too well.

There is a coldness at the heart
Which prophesies the fatal dart ;
There is a brooding sense of fear
Which speaks the powers of sorrow near,
A sudden trembling of the soul,
Like the earthquake's warning shock
Of fear that thrills the solid rock,
Ere gathering troubles onward roll,—
A pain which strikes the tender breast,
A deep and undefined unrest,
As of the mountain lake, whose moan
Anticipates the thunder's tone,
As though our nature would prepare
To meet the storm that's in the air.

What means that shudder oft and deep,

That restless walk, that broken sleep,
That close-drawn lip, that pallid eye,
That deep involuntary sigh ?
'Tis fate that hovers,—fearful, vast,
Whose sombre shade is o'er her cast,
A thing, its horror none may know
Save those who feel its wordless woe.
By night, by day, her eyes held wide
From sleep see him before her glide !
She starts from some deep reverie
To hear him whispering gently nigh :
She walks,—she hears him tread behind,
Detects his footstep on the wind
Which rustles the sere leaves that fall
In gusty clouds about the hall :
Or when at midnight swells the gale,
'Tis more than human in its wail ;
Its blast is charged with many a word
Her boding ear too quick hath heard ;
It sobs across the wintry plain
Like a dying man in pain,—
A dying man, whose groans appal
The gentle girl who hears them all ;
And darker, surer token still,

She hears—her young heart's blood runs chill—
For evermore within her ear,
In muffled cadence slow and drear,
The measured tolling of a bell ;
She knows it,—*it is Roland's knell !*

v.

Lo ! I have heard the marriage chime
Peal glad and free full many a time,
And on the hill ere break of day
The bell for prayers sound far away,
And in the stilly eventide
The vesper bell, and oft beside
The solemn single knell of death,
And ships' bells tolling o'er the sea
Above the drowned who stir beneath
When the waves work wrathfully,
And from its hoarse grim throat of rust
The tocsin boom at dead of night
Above a city ; but I trust
Never in my fear or fright,
In trance, or dream, or fantasy,
Or midnight vision e'er to hear

The knell that rang in Cathrine's ear
So constantly, so awfully.

"Who rang the castle bell last eve,
Just ere the stars arose in heaven?"
"Nay, lady," old Gwendolph replied,
"It did not ring, my word believe,
I speak as I may be forgiven,
No bell rang yester eventide.—
'Twas just so when her mother died,
With her babe, not six days old,
Lying wailing at her side,
Ah, long ago ! for she would fold
Her hands in fright, and say there fell
Upon her soul a solemn knell,—
I do remember that right well,"
Said old Gwendolph,—and then he sighed.

Far away, far away,
In steep belfries built of cloud,
Sinful spirits dwell, and toll
Dirges for the dying soul,
Dirges wild and drear and loud.

On the ropes are ghostly hands,
Round the ropes are shadowy bands,
Pale and thin like shapes of mist
Are their forms, and each gaunt wrist
Pulls a viewless bell of air,
And to smile they never dare.

They are centuries old,
And their hands are icy cold,
Stiff each lock of frozen hair,
Dreadful are their breasts and bare,
And filled with blood that never ran,
And their hollow cheeks are wan,
Coursed with floods of darksome tears,
Stained with storms of endless years,
And yet they bear the form of man.

Eternally, eternally,
Lo ! they toll for those who die ;
And I have heard the sages say
Spirits doomed are they
For some base and hateful sin
Done when Time was new and gay,
Thus to toil in heavy woe,
Ere the rest of death they know,
Death which all but they may win.

They have rung long ages out,
They will ring fresh ages in.

* * * *

VI.

There where the moonlight through the pane
Lies on the floor, a long white lane
Chequered with shadows from the trees,
Which idly toss upon the breeze,
Painting the broad bare stretch of wall
With floating figures, weird and tall,
See, fullest in the ghostly stream
Of pallid light, a mirror gleam,
Where Cathrine binds the truant tress,
And shows, unveiled, her loveliness.

'Tis midnight's solemn hour : repose
Long since hath healed a thousand woes.
Hush ! from the heated hall below
A step is coming, light and slow.
Alone, along the moonlit stair
She treads,—her hand hath had no care
To light the useless lamp, when fair
With such full radiance glows the air.

Absorbed, with fixed and aimless eye,
Which slumber's spell has learned to fly,
But left a world of sorrow hid
Beneath the heavy rayless lid,
Unseeing, looking straight before,
She comes—she treads the creaking floor;
Far out upon the placid park
She gazes wistfully, till—hark !
An hour has sped, the bells toll one,
The near and distant belfries toll,
While far across the hillside lone
On misty gusts the echoes roll.
She moves ; her fragrant garments glide
In silken softness from her side,
Her flowing hair unloosed has strayed
In rich abundance from its braid,
Covering with a golden tide
Charms it doth heighten more than hide,—
The snowy neck, the blue-veined breast,
Whose timid beauty half-confessed.
Shows, as beneath some water clear
The slumbering flowers submerged appear.
So pure, so lovely glows the grace
Of maiden years in her still face,

It seems in-truth a sacred place ;
The very light is wrong to gaze
So long upon her loveliness,
And viewless shapes of air are bold
Unshamed such beauty to behold.
Now turns she to that downy nest
Where nightly spirits guard her rest ;
But ere to its deep dreams she pass,
Unconsciously, with wandering eye,
She casts one glance toward yon glass,—
One look,—O God ! what doth she see ?
Lo ! from her cheeks the pulses flee,
She stands as rooted to the place,
Pale horror glowing in her face ;
Her eye is fixed, the eyeballs glare,
Her very soul seems burning there,
Her lips wide open, bloodless, pale,
Seem withered by the siroc's gale,
Dilated, moveless, robbed of breath,
Her nostrils stand, as fixed in death ;
No word, no motion, formless, deep,
The terror through her blood doth creep ;
Transfixed, with stiff uplifted hands,
See, in an icy trance she stands,

With head bent forward as to see
The depth of some dread mystery ;
Oh ! who shall tell what froze that eye
Into such lurid agony ?

VII.

It was not life, it was not death,
It was not thing of mortal mould.
That drew the eye, that held the breath,
That made the frozen veins run cold.
It was not human eye which met
The bending lustre of her face,
Else were not that fair forehead wet,
Else were not fixed on air that gaze.
The face which from that mirror shone,
Was one whose shape she ne'er could miss,
She knew it well,—'twas not her own
That gazed on her,—*O God, 'twas his !*
His who had mingled with the dead
Long since on that far battle plain ;
His brow, as with a wound, was red,
His lip was drawn as if in pain ;
Deep in their sockets those dark eyes
Glowed sadly with a dying fire :

They seemed more sorrowful, more wise
Since last they gaily gazed on her.
From out their depth entreaty cried,
A voiceless eloquence was there,
Each glance was burning with the wide,
Still solemn earnestness of prayer,—
One prayer in every awful glance,
That she should keep her sacred vow ;
Ah, God !—mark its significance,
That she should meet, and meet him now !

The locks were damp, and closely clung
About the pallid blood-streaked brow,
And all around there dimly hung
A ghastly radiance, burning low.
His cold lips moved as if to speak,
And closed as though they dared not move,
Yet longed their silent vows to break,
To breathe again the word of love.
They parted, smiled, they tender grew
As when they last were bent on her ;
Then silently themselves withdrew,
Melted, and passed into the air.
And where but now his brow had gleamed,

All white and spectral from the tomb,
Her own appeared,—its likeness seemed
The image of some livid doom.
And then the strain, the spell, was broke,
The slow blood filled the heart once more,
She breathed—she shuddered—trembled—woke,
And swooning fell upon the floor.

VIII.

They laid her tenderly upon her bed,
And noiseless were the feet that mustered round;
Softly they bathed the fair and prostrate head,
And spoke with lips that scarcely uttered sound.
Ten morning suns the glittering casement dyed;
Ten dewy nights fell over vale and hill,
And ten times in her course the moon did ride
With all her stars, and yet she slumbered still.
Through those white lips the muffled breathing stole,
Subdued and intermittent, with long pause,
And lingering labour, as the gentle soul
Would tarry unresolved ere she withdraws
From her companion through the ended years;
Or wistfully would weep for her sick friend,
The failing body, who through deathly tears

Departs alone her difficult way to wend.
Scarce moved the marble contour of her breast,
Wherein the dying pulse was weak and slow—
You might have thought it what it seemed, but just
Perceptible there lived a pallid glow,
And on each cheek there dwelt a feeble stain
Of hectic colour, flickering to and fro.
The eyes were closed, ne'er to be oped again
With that fond light of joy they loved to know.
Closed in deep night beneath that frozen brow,
And their long lashes swept the icy cheek
Like dark-fringed leaves slumbering in drifted snow ;
While in their lids the blue veins trickled weak,
As the numbed rivulets in winter's days.
So slept she : the soft halo of her hair
Rimmed in with gold the splendours of her face,
Nor ought save tears and silence flourished there,
Or lived within that dim and desolate place.

IX.

Ten days unconscious in her trance she slept,
Ten days the sunlight swept along the wall
In its broad pageant, and the moonlight crept
Behind, like a pale ruined follower

On her betrayer's foot-tracks, grief in her
Dumb gestures and bowed trembling figure tall.
Ten days of sunlight,—yet she did not stir ;
It scarce seemed life, so motionless was it :
It scarce seemed death, so much was there of life.
A fading radiance yet the features lit,
And feebly still the pulse stirred in its strife.
Oft bent they nearer, thinking she was gone,
Or held to her still lips the scarce stained glass,
And learning she yet breathes, they one by one
With lingering hope the hurried whisper pass.
He watched there night and day,—that dark-browed
sire

Whose will had striven in vain to stem the tide
Of her young love's first deep and trembling fire,
And force her to an alien's faithless side.
He scarce spoke oftener than she who slept,
And there was something burning in his eyes
Which babbling pity at a distance kept,
And held those silent who would sympathize.
By her still side the sleepless father sat,
Gazing on her, or held her lifeless hand
As though he might make peace at least with that,
If words no more those lips should e'er command.

And they who saw him felt their hearts grow soft,
And hatred for his harshness slowly died ;
They gazed, and gazing on him turned full oft
The downcast head, and for his sorrow sighed.
They wept for him : but no tear like the rain
Fell mercifully from that steadfast eye ;
Deep, deeper with each hour the lines of pain
Wrought sudden age upon his forehead high.
So watched he penitent : so slept she deep
In fitful slumbers close beside the gate
Of that fair land where mortals never weep,
Or know the loss of love, the gain of hate.

X.

No need is there to lengthen out the tale,
Or multiply with measured words the song
Of simple sadness, which the heart would wait
Beside the bier where perished one so young.
Words are but feeble comforters of woe,
And language has no liturgy whose power
May breathe a music whose melodious flow
Shall chant the dirges of a dying hour.
Song is too insincere for scenes like this,
And all unworthy is the worthiest wire.

Hath not the meetest poet wrought amiss,
The greatest swept with unnerved hand the lyre,
And genius, when it strives in language fit
To utter deepest feeling, paled its fires,
And owned experience deepest where unwrit,
And holiest where unpublished it expires?
The winds which sigh where youth and beauty rest,
The soft spring rains which drop their fragrant tears
The living light which gilds each lowly breast,
The young birds chanting to the listening spheres,
And all the tuneless sounds of earth and air,
With symphonies of silence from the skies,
The music which is present everywhere
To soothe the sadness of earth's miseries,—
These are the poems which are consecrate
With such pure power of melody and peace,
That the heart hearing is not desolate.
Lo ! the faint spirit drinks a blissful ease,
Unnamed, unnameable in mortal speech,
—Half memory, half forgetfulness—and we
In such an hour share all that poets preach
Of hope, or peace, or ideal purity,
In fellowship with all that hems us round.
The humblest powers and sights that near us lie,

Each waving grass-blade and each summer sound,
In intercourse with the vast bending sky,—
The vital air, the light of suns and moons,
The winds and waters,—we our years rehearse
And gather harvests of immortal boons,
In solemn wisdom, or in peace sublime,
While troops of meaner thoughts and hopes disperse
In commune with that power whose breath is Time,
Whose home and dwelling is the universe.

XI.

She woke,—she spoke but once ere all was done ;
They thought life filled once more the languid vein :
It was a passing breath, and soon was gone ;
The faint lamp flickered,—died,—ne'er sprang again :
And those wide eyes in their last lustre shone,
Then closed for ever on a world of pain.

There is a something deeper than the blood,
A canker which the youthful heart can fill,
Ere yet its poison may be understood ;
Its destiny is done, and it doth kill.
There is a sudden misery whose chill
Robs life of all its gaiety and its good ;

It is no evil known to learned lore,
And none, save such as in the soul's deep mine
Have laboured long its presence may divine ;
No outward sign its deadly work awakes,
The rose bends low,—decays,—and blooms no more,
The heart grows aged in a day and breaks.

'Twas so she died—her heart was bruised to death,
And could indeed do nothing else but break,
Her meek breast gently rendered up its breath,
And angels stooped the precious gift to take.
Wreathed with fresh flowers plucked from the mountain's side,
Young pansies, violets, and perfumed rue,
And rosemary, yet glittering with the dew,
She lay,—decked gaily as for nature's bride.
With many garlands round her golden hair,
And in her hand a lily, whose pure hue
Might match the brow where snowier flowerets grew—

A queen she slept, in rank, and seeming fair,
And all was regal, all was saintly there.
'Twas strange ; but Cathrine's face was very calm,
And they who round her silently did weep

Thought that she must have found some blessed balm
Of untold comfort in that dreamless sleep.

* * * *

XII.

The rustics say that on that night
When Cathrine passed from earth,
On Arvelon's height there glowed a light
Of more than earthly birth :
On one lone tower it brightly burned,
Nor paled its vivid ray
Till her fair spirit was disurned
Of perishable clay.
And he who kept the castle gate
Says, when the midnight hour waxed late,
Ere the earth began to turn
In her sleep towards the morn,
There rang upon the rocky ground
The loud tramp of a horseman's sound.
He drew the ward, full wide it flew,
As though its guest it loved and knew,
And straight he saw a goodly knight.

With helmet bruised as if in fight ;
His face was pale, his eye was sunk
Deep in its socket ; lean and shrunk
Appeared his cheek, and on his brow
There was a stain of blood I trow.
He spoke not : but he rode right on
Just as the bells were tolling one.
His coal-black steed beneath him strode
As on a well-remembered road ;
He came not forth for near an hour,
And then, when faded from the tower
The mystic light, and when the bell
Rang slow and sad the maiden's knell,
Upon the rock there rang once more
The noise of hoofs, and wide the door
Flew for that rider late and strange.
But none came nigh ; and down the range
Of hills the tumult died away.
This was the night she died, they say.

XIII.

I know not ; but I know there be,
Two graves beside the moaning sea,

And one beyond the surging main
Far off, upon a battle plain.
In one she rests, whose hapless love
With these rude flowers of song is wove,
Beside her, he whose father's heart
Forgot its truer, tenderer part.
And in the common grave, where lie
The dead who by the sword may die,
He sleeps—young heart of strength and truth,—
Roland, who perished in his youth.
And these three spirits in some place
Of purer knowledge, better life ;
Long since perchance have face to face
Met, and unlearned the lore of strife ;
And looking in each other's eyes,
Have read the secrets life concealed,
And so more glad, because more wise,
The wrongs of earth in heaven are healed.

XIV.

And thus they died, long, long ago.
A hundred winters with their snow,
And summers with their suns and flowers,
And all the host of rushing hours,

With twice ten thousand days and nights,
And busy families of men
Who lived beneath their constant lights,
Have come and gone since then.

So all things change in order sure ;
Change only changeless doth endure.
So all things come, so all things pass
In the brief turning of a glass,
Bloom, struggle with laborious pain,
Their little day exhaust too soon,
Wither and die ; and still the moon,
And sun, and stars unmoved remain :
They shine to-day as they have shone
On buried centuries, dead and gone,
And radiance pour upon each tower
Of many-towered Arvelon.

But that is different : tenantless
Its gray walls crumble to the wave.
It stands as if in mourner's dress
Of ivy weeds, and mosses rank
Crept upward from the water dank,
Beside the Past's unheeded grave.
So be it : we with restless haste,
Speed onward with the hurrying hours.

This silent stands amid the waste
Of generations unlike ours,—
A link to what hath been, and shall
With years come finally to all.

L'ENVOI.

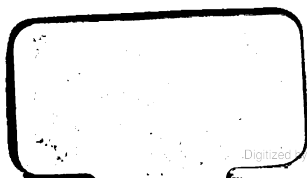
I heard a murmur rising from the sea,
The sea of Time, and moanings of distress.
I watched the winds sweep o'er its wilderness,
Uncovering then its naked majesty,
And I was awed and troubled. I would press
The salt weed to my lips, and knew not how
To speak the feelings that would burn and glow
With rapture which was almost bitterness.
Voices for me there were in dusky stars,
And meanings in each sunbeam, sights of joy
In each accustomed thing. At length a boy
No longer, I awoke, and through the bars
To my imprisoned spirit came the strange fair morn
Of power, which recognised the task whereto 'twas born.

I stepped forth then into the altered earth,
And viewed the throbbing mysteries of Life,—
Thoughts, feelings, passions deep in clamorous strife,
And sorrow, rapture, love, joy, tears, and mirth.
It was not vanity. My eyes grew dim
With burning tears, and straightway in my brain
Music awoke, the child of joy and pain,
And my young lips framed then this firstling hymn.
Lo ! it is theirs who feel the eternal force
Of these three daily mysteries I have sung—
Life, death, and love ; yea, love for ever young,
Who outstrips both his fellows in their course,
And gaining first the untrod eternities,
There founds a glorious kingdom for the pure and wise.

“ A kingdom : ” lo ! the sweet words echo on
With gladsome promise through the busy brain,
Like strange wild music with a sweet refrain.
These eyes have seen the spiritual realm, whereon
Eternally there shines the sun of Truth,—
Far off, indeed ; but from the mighty dome
The circling melodies of hope have come,
And breaths, and visions of immortal youth,
And are remembered ever. Friends, farewell !

Music there is yet sounding in the dark
Of this great world of God's ; and, if we hark,
Behold on every side the faint notes swell.
And I have heard it, deepening day by day
Within my soul, while I have framed this faltering lay.

FINIS.



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